HORIZON

SPRING 1966

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2023 with funding from
No Sponsor

https://archive.org/details/bwb_P8-AWC-219

HORIZON

SPRING, 1966 · VOLUME VIII, NUMBER 2

© 1966 by American Heritage Publishing Co., Inc. All rights reserved under Berne and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. Reproduction in whole or in part of any article without permission is prohibited. U.S. Copyright is not claimed for the color plates on pages 7, 11, 73–77, 79, 81, 85, 87, 98–103, 104. Printed in the United States of America.

Is the Past Dispensable?

Art, in the words of one disenchanted museum curator, is "a game in which one pays for the right to hang on his walls someone else's mental troubles." The game, he goes on, "more often than not leads to expense and fascinates its small circle of devotees who are all convinced that the world needs it, whereas those outside the circle are equally convinced that it does not." As a game, he further states, art makes sense only so long as the entire circle participates; it ceases to make sense—and then reveals its true nature—the moment someone violates the rules.

In 1917, to emphasize his distaste for the art of that time—and his admiration of ready-made objects—Marcel Duchamp submitted for a New York exhibition a urinal entitled "Fontaine," bearing the signature R. Mutt. His entry broke all the old rules and caused a sensation at the time; but since then those rules have been shattered by other equally blatant infractions that have, nonetheless, earned respectable standing among dealers and collectors. In recent years the forms and functions of painting and sculpture have been changing so fast and so radically that it takes keen guesswork to say what may be coming next. Is the "game" played out at last, or are the "mental troubles" of vanguard artists too large and complicated to be covered by paint and, suitably framed, hung on a wall?

In the article that begins on page 4, an English critic, Robert Wraight, speculates on the changing nature of the art world during the technological take-over of today and tomorrow. His comments provide a sequel to the recent article by Alvin Toffler (Horizon, Summer, 1965), which cautioned us to avoid the shock of the totally strange and new by trying to anticipate what it may "sound and smell and taste and feel like in the fast-onrushing future."

Mr. Wraight's forecast is witty and informed. He suggests that art as we know it may disappear into the dusty record of the past, and art as we do not yet know it may one day completely envelop us in a kaleidoscopic sort of environment. Even our buildings, avers Mr. Wraight, may one day be constantly moving structures—a prospect we will explore in a forthcoming issue.

Americans, of all people, have been conditioned to change. No one else on earth has seen human society so profoundly modified—so richly benefited or so pitilessly tested—by technological advances. Tocqueville long ago observed that to discard the past for the possibilities of the future may be a positive attitude; at best, it is an act of faith in an illimitable tomorrow. But it has disheartening aspects, as we can see in the chaotic changes suffered by our cities. It is sobering to realize that there is far less still standing of colo-

Horizon is published every three months
by American Heritage Publishing Co., Inc.

PRESIDENT
James Parton
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Joseph J. Thorndike
EDITORIAL DIRECTOR, HORIZON
Oliver Jensen
EDITORIAL DIRECTOR, BOOK DIVISION
Richard M. Ketchum
ART DIRECTOR
Irwin Glusker

Editorial and executive offices: 551
Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017.

EDITOR
Marshall B. Davidson
MANAGING EDITOR: Ralph Backlund ART EDITOR: Jane Wilson
ART DIRECTOR: Elton Robinson
ASSOCIATE EDITORS: Shirley Tomkievicz, Norman Kotker
ASSISTANT EDITORS: Barbara Klaw, Wendy Buehr
EDITORIAL ASSISTANT: Priscilla Flood
COPY EDITOR: Mary Ann Pfeiffer *Assistant:* Joan Rehe

ADVISORY BOARD: Gilbert Highet, *Chairman*, Frederick Burkhardt,
William Harlan Hale, Jotham Johnson, John Walker
EUROPEAN CONSULTING EDITOR: J. H. Plumb, *Christ's College, Cambridg*
EUROPEAN BUREAU: Gertrudis Feliu, *Chief, 11 rue du Bouloi, Paris Ier*

HORIZON
A Magazine of the Arts
SPRING, 1966 · VOLUME VIII, NUMBER 2

nial New York than there is of Periclean Athens; and if the demolition-construction cycle continues at its present rate, the same may soon be true of nineteenth-century New York. In the next issue HORIZON will publish an article by Roger Starr, Executive Director of the Citizens' Housing and Planning Council, calling attention to the complicated problem of preserving historic landmarks and other architectural monuments.

The new Rolls-Royce

Until we went to press with our last issue the inviolable symbol of unchanging style and tradition had been, as Lucius Beebe lovingly described it, the Rolls-Royce. We did not realize that we were printing a memorial. As our pages went into the bindery, news was released that this great bastion of stability had succumbed to the changing times: the classic design of the Rolls has been revised—except for its classic radiator grille which, though lower and squarer, survives as a quaint reminder of another day. THE EDITORS

All correspondence about subscriptions should be addressed to: HORIZON Subscription Office, 379 West Center St., Marion, Ohio 43301.

Single Copies: $ 5.00
Subscriptions: $16.00 per year in the U.S. & Canada; elsewhere, $17.00

Annual indexes for Volumes I–VII are available at $1 each. A cumulative index for Volumes I–V is available at $3. HORIZON is also indexed in the *Readers Guide to Periodical Literature.*

The editors welcome contributions but can assume no responsibility for unsolicited material.

Title registered U.S. Patent Office

Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices.

Art

WHAT IS ART COMING TO? *Robert Wraight* 4
A NEW LOOK AT AUDUBON *Marshall B. Davidson* 32
ARTLESS ART 72

The Literary Life

THE COMPLETE ROMANTIC *Peter Gay* 12
IN SEARCH OF SAPPHO *Peter Green* 104

History

THE AGE OF CHARLEMAGNE *Régine Pernoud* 16
THE KING IS DEAD, LONG LIVE THE KING! *Lacey Baldwin Smith* 90

The Performing Arts

THE BELLY DANCE *Morroe Berger* 42

Archaeology

THE CORN OF COXCATLAN *Vance Bourjaily* 50

Architecture

PALLADIO WAS NOT PALLADIAN *Pierre Schneider* 56
FROM A FORGOTTEN KINGDOM 86

Manners & Morals

FROM THE KASATCHOK TO THE TWIST *Richard Symont* 78
VARIATIONS ON A FOUR-LETTER WORD *Drawings by Michael Ramus* 98
AMERICAN HUMOR, 1966 *William K. Zinsser* 116

COVER: This noble countenance was carved about A.D. 810 at the imperial court of Charlemagne. Only about two inches high, it is part of an ivory plaque that once adorned the back cover of the famous Lorsch Gospel. It depicts Zacharias, father of John the Baptist. Like Charlemagne's great empire, the Gospel was eventually divided; parts of it now rest in Bucharest, Rome, and London. The portion here reproduced, now in the Victoria & Albert Museum, is one of the finest ivories bequeathed us by the Carolingian era, that brief and brilliant period of political unity in what has so long been called the Dark Ages. An article on Charlemagne's achievement begins on page 16.

what is Art coming to?

"What immense innovations are being wrought all around us now . . . how can artists portray it all with the old means of art?"
—Bertolt Brecht

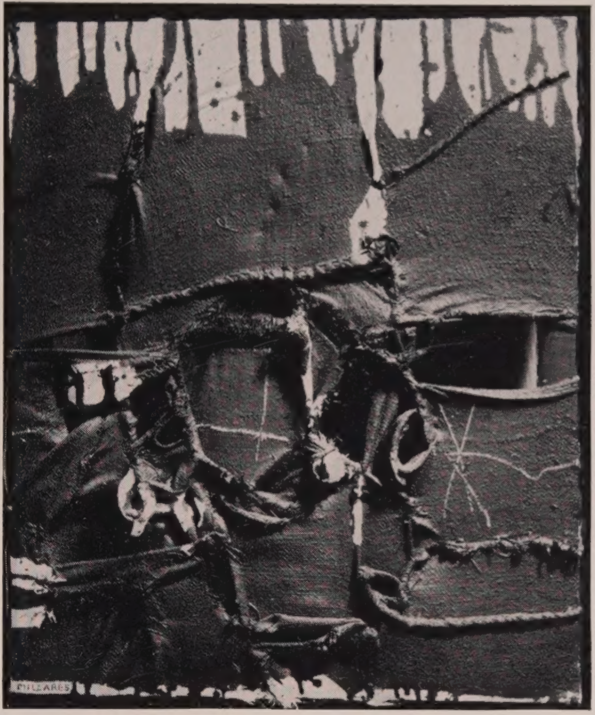
By ROBERT WRAIGHT

One day in 1962 I was looking through the London *Daily Telegraph,* to find what its art critic had to say about an exhibition I had seen him at the day before, when the headline "Pop Art" caught my eye and I began to read what appeared to be a review of the work of an artist, John Gasby, of whom I had never heard. Although it was not what I was looking for, I was compelled, after the first few lines, to read on:

"Gasby's latest works, making use of a metaphysical pullulation of disparate forms, painted surfaces, false beards, oscillographs, chewed-up telephones, Victorian daguerreotypes smeared with treacle and disinfectant, collapsed bedsteads and mummified rats, not only express the existential violence of the urban junkscape. They actually *are* violent in themselves.

"Parts of his enormous compositions are cunningly sown with land mines or booby-trapped in such a way that the unwary art-lover may be dropped 30 feet into a pit of quicklime. In other parts fierce Tibetan mastiffs are chained up or there are wardrobes full of lead poison to fall at a touch.

"The fear of sudden death or serious injury, and indeed the actual experience of these things, Gasby believes, is today an essential part of the aesthetic experience, impacting a tonal sporadicism, a universalized fragmentalism which has revolutionized our fundamental concepts of meaning, function, and image."



Cuadro 147 *by Manolo Millares, 1961; oil on torn and "mended" canvas.*

PIERRE MATISSE GALLERY; OPPOSITE: ROBERT HYDE

How much of that, I wonder, did you have to read before you realized that it was a spoof review? Probably very little. Yet I, who had the advantage of knowing that it was part of the satirical *Way of the World* column by "Peter Simple," have to admit that it was not until I reached the bit about land mines that I was sure it was meant to be funny. This is no reflection upon my sense of humor nor, indeed, upon Peter Simple's. The fact is that that first paragraph reads very much like hundreds of serious reviews that have appeared in recent years. Such phrases as "pullulation of disparate forms" and "violence of the urban junkscape" are virtually standard critical language nowadays. But that is not all. Anyone who has followed the three-ring circus that is avant-garde art today will know that artists *do* make use of false beards, oscillographs, chewed-up telephones, Victorian daguerreotypes, collapsed (and uncollapsed) bedsteads, and mummified rats. And if they thought the publicity would help, they would not hesitate to cover the whole lot with treacle and disinfectant.

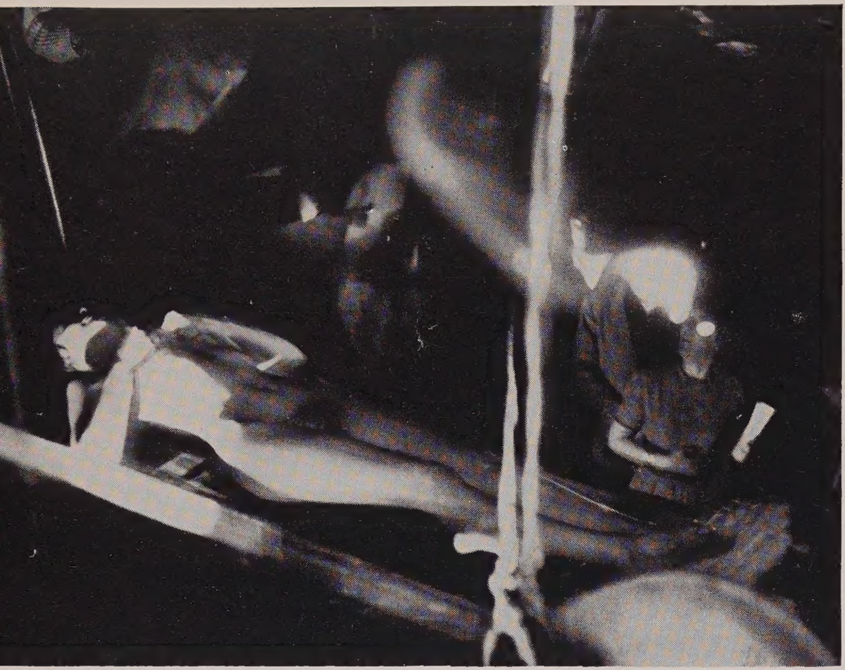
The truth is that there is hardly any object that a professional humorist like Peter Simple, or anyone else for that matter, can think of that has not already been used by the so-called Neo-Realists or Neo-Dadaists. Glancing through a back number of *Art International* picked at random, I find illustrations of paintings, collages, constructions, and sculptures incorporating the following things: a tree, a double divan, an electric toaster, a commode, a bath, a lawn mower, a stag's head, a stuffed hawk and a handsaw (just to show the artist knows the difference?), paper flowers, a doll, a gas mask, glass eyes, pills, birds' eggs, apples, ampoules, pins, ping-pong balls, a wineglass, soap, a comb, wire netting, string, chair legs, door handles, a window, a sugar bowl, tables and chairs, a complete bathroom (with towels, laundry basket, bath mat, electric-light switch, and cut-out nude), false teeth, a gas stove, and so on.

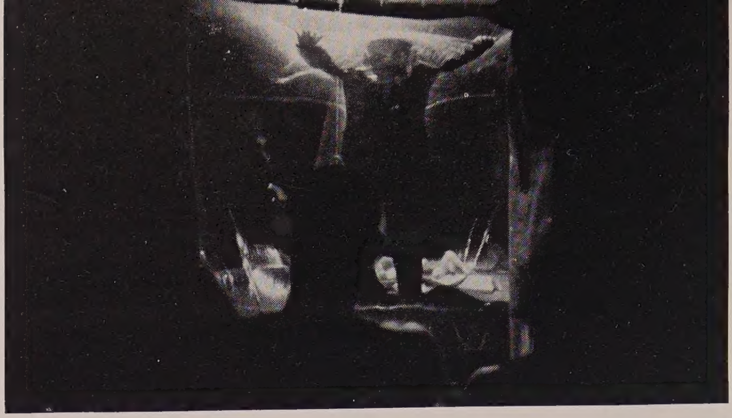
And still that is not all. Reading about Gasby's belief that the actual experience of sudden death or serious injury is today "an essential part of the aesthetic experience" recalled for me a meeting I had with a member of the Parisian "Happenings" movement, Ben Vauthier. At that time Mr. Vauthier and his wife were living in the window of London's Gallery One in full view of passers-by. They were one of the exhibits in an exhibition called "The Misfits," which included, among other things, a reproduction of the *Mona Lisa* with large nails sticking out of it. Below it was a vegetable rack complete with an assortment of vegetables and a notice inviting visitors to take a carrot, a beet, a cabbage, or a potato and slam it onto the painting. Another exhibit was a "magic box," which Mr. Vauthier tried to sell me at what he called the bargain price of twenty pounds. It was a small, roughly made wooden box painted black and containing some object or objects that rattled when it was shaken. The "magic" lay in the fact that as long as the box remained unopened its contents would remain a mystery.

Mr. Vauthier explained that the exhibition was rather

Easel painting, some say, is in a terminal stage (see above).
Prophets among the avant-garde claim that the artist will proceed from here to take our whole environment for his "canvas."
By projecting "op art" designs with colored light onto a seated nude and a flat wall, as pictured opposite, the English artist Robert Hyde suggests an approach to such a new visual language.

In "happenings," in experiments with filmed and live incidents simultaneously presented, and in choreographic collages the visual arts, the theatre, and the dance are combined as colorful, moving assemblages in which the artist himself may take part.





ROBERT R. MC ELROY; LEFT: SAME

JEAN MARQUIS

Happenings: far left, Allan Kaprow's "Service for the Dead"; above, Robert Whitman's "American Moon"; and left, a recent happening in Montparnasse.

small beer compared with some of the things he and his friends had "made happen" in Paris. There was, for example, the time they filled an art gallery from floor to ceiling with refuse from the city's trash cans. But what intrigued me most were his stories of Yves Klein, the archpriest of Parisian "happenings," who, he said, was missing and believed dead. For a long time Mr. Klein had planned a supreme happening in which he was to be run over by a steam roller, but when he tried to make it "happen," in a Paris street, the police intervened. He was, they said, causing a traffic jam. In fact, Yves Klein has since died, but of conventional "natural causes."

In America, too, "death and serious injury" have occupied the minds of a section of the avant-garde during the past few years. The Gertrude Stein Gallery in New York held an exhibition called "American Death Show" and another called the "No Show." A brochure issued in connection with the latter called for "art that screams, roars, vomits, rages, goes mad, murders, rapes, commits every bloody and obscene act it can, to express only a shred of the human emotions that lie prisoner beneath the sanitary tiles here in adman's utopia." New York has had its share of "happenings," one of which was called (but only after it had happened) "A Service for the Dead" and was created in the boiler room of the Maidman Playhouse. The place, a huge, cavernous pit, reeked of oil fumes and the smell of rot. Water gurgled across the floor, while from the ceiling hung clusters of garbage cans, buckets, and other junk which were clanked together at intervals to augment a dirge played by a group of bedraggled musicians. Below the garbage cans, suspended horizontally by four ropes, was a ladder on which a nude girl lay motionless, her hands across her breasts as if in death (above left). Lights flashed on and off, sirens shrieked and wailed, a woman giggled hysterically. Out of darkness, flashlights picked out the "dead" girl on the ladder swaying above the heads of the onlookers. Then suddenly the corpse flung out her arms and scattered handfuls of torn paper over the people below.

This sort of thing belongs properly to the theatre, of course, but the man who devised it, Allan Kaprow, had been a painter. He has explained how it developed from collages and assemblages he had made "using painted paper, cloth and photos, as well as mirrors, electric lights, plastic films, aluminum foil, ropes, straw; objects that could be attached to or hung in front of, the canvas along with various sounds and odors."

Kaprow is only one of hundreds of serious artists who, in the twenty years since the end of World War II, have abandoned paints and brushes as a means of expression, and who believe that the art of the "easel-weasel" is played out, finished. There is nothing new in this. The Dadaists said the same thing nearly fifty years ago; and the Neo-Dadaists, New Realists, Pop artists, and so on, in spite of their protests to the contrary, have in effect simply carried on where the old brigade left off. In the same way, the happenings-makers have merely carried to their illogical conclusions ideas which the surrealists were experimenting with forty years ago. Both groups are, in fact, neo-romantics whose days are already numbered.

The artist Robert Rauschenberg is seen on roller skates in his dance collage Pelican.

A London dance-theatre experiment by Robert Hyde and Peter Jones

Unmarked Interchange, *a moving picture with live inserts, by the ONCE Group, Ann Arbor, Michigan.*

PETER MOORE; ABOVE: SAME

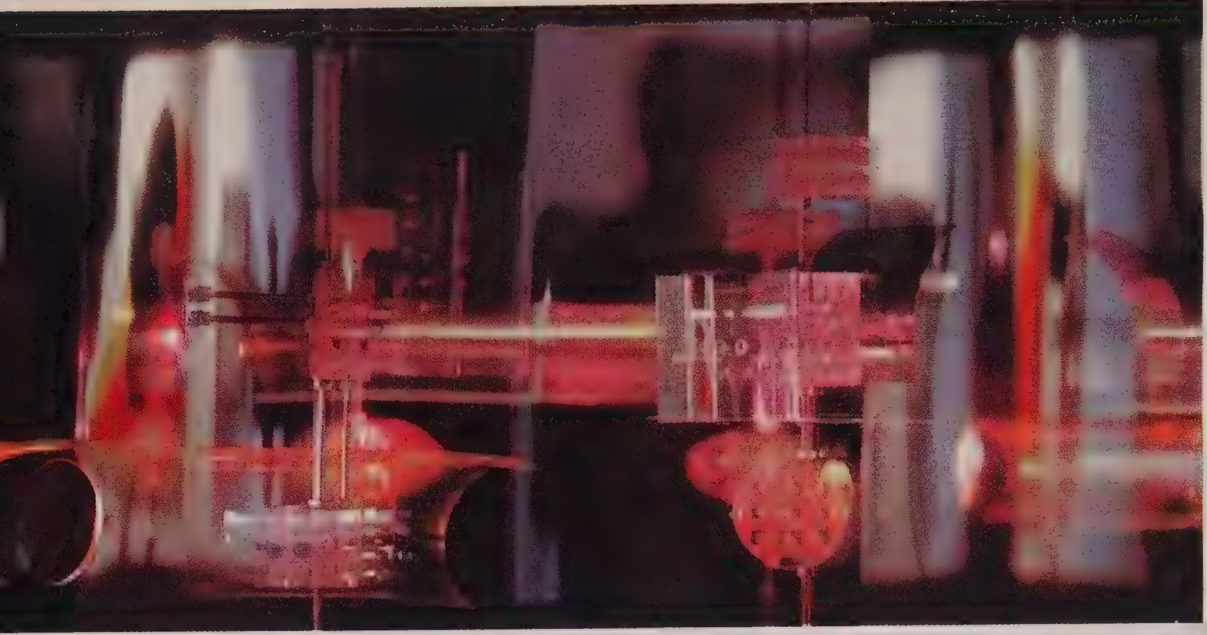
Nevertheless, like Action painting and the craze for the jumbo-size canvas that it initiated, happenings provide a few more nails for the coffin of the reactionary cult-of-the-precious-object-in-the-gilt-frame, which is the principal foundation of the art game. They are symptoms of a revolution that must ultimately succeed in spite of all the counterrevolutionary rear-guard actions the art gamesmen may fight.

That there are probably more easel pictures being painted today than ever before does not alter the fact that this form of art has been dying for fifty years. The present vast quantity being vomited forth is probably the final death throe. Ninety-nine-point-nine plus per cent of them will be absolutely valueless in a hundred years. The remainder will probably find their way into the public art galleries to fill the last gaps in the completed history of easel painting, which will have lasted roughly five hundred years. To a not-far-distant future generation, those great art galleries (called "museums" even in Britain by then) will be of no more interest to the general public than today's museums of paleontology or ethnology. The art gamesman's dream of educating the masses to appreciate the precious-object sort of art will long ago have been abandoned, along with the art galleries, to a handful of square eggheads. The masses will have their own sort of art all around them. What sort of art will it be? It will not be anything like the bulk of what passes for avant-garde art today. Not only will the brush-and-paint tradition have finally been played out, but into oblivion with it will have gone the rubbish collages made by the legions of would-be neo-Schwitterses, all the old-iron sculptures of imitation Tinguelys, all the drip paintings of imitation Pollocks, the squashed motorcars of John Chamberlain, the dust-laden combine paintings of Rauschenberg and company, the giant baked-potato and hamburger jokes of Claes Oldenburg, the latter-day ready-mades of Jim Dine and his followers, the burnt books of John Latham, the burnt canvases of Herr Piene, and the slashed and torn ones of Signor Fontana and Señor Millares.

It was all fun, even exciting fun, while it lasted, but it was mostly marking time or, at best, consolidating the discoveries of an earlier generation. It was also a jamboree for pseudo-innovators. Peggy Guggenheim (whose collection of modern art has been described as second-to-none in private hands) wrote in 1960, not without some justification, that art had gone to hell—not permanently, of course. "One cannot expect every decade to produce genius," she said in her book *Confessions of an Art Addict*. "The twentieth century has already produced enough. A field must lie fallow now and then. Artists try too hard to be original. That is why we have all this painting that isn't painting any more."

On reflection, what a very curious statement that is for Miss Guggenheim to have made. Evidently the great champion of the avant-garde of the 1940's has become the reactionary of the 1960's, unable to accept the strong likelihood that the day will come when painting as we know it will be practiced, if at all, only as a quaint antique revival, in somewhat the same way as Morris dancing

DENISE RENEE GALLERY, PARIS; RIGHT: HEBERT LOEBEL, COLL. MR. & MRS. TAFT SCHREIBER; BELOW: N.Y. TIMES



Nicolas Schöffer's Microtemps 6, *1965*

Art is literally on the move to the future. Sculptured forms are spun by hand (below), rotated by motor (bottom electronically operated in changing, colored light (left), with never a quiet moment—unless the power fails.

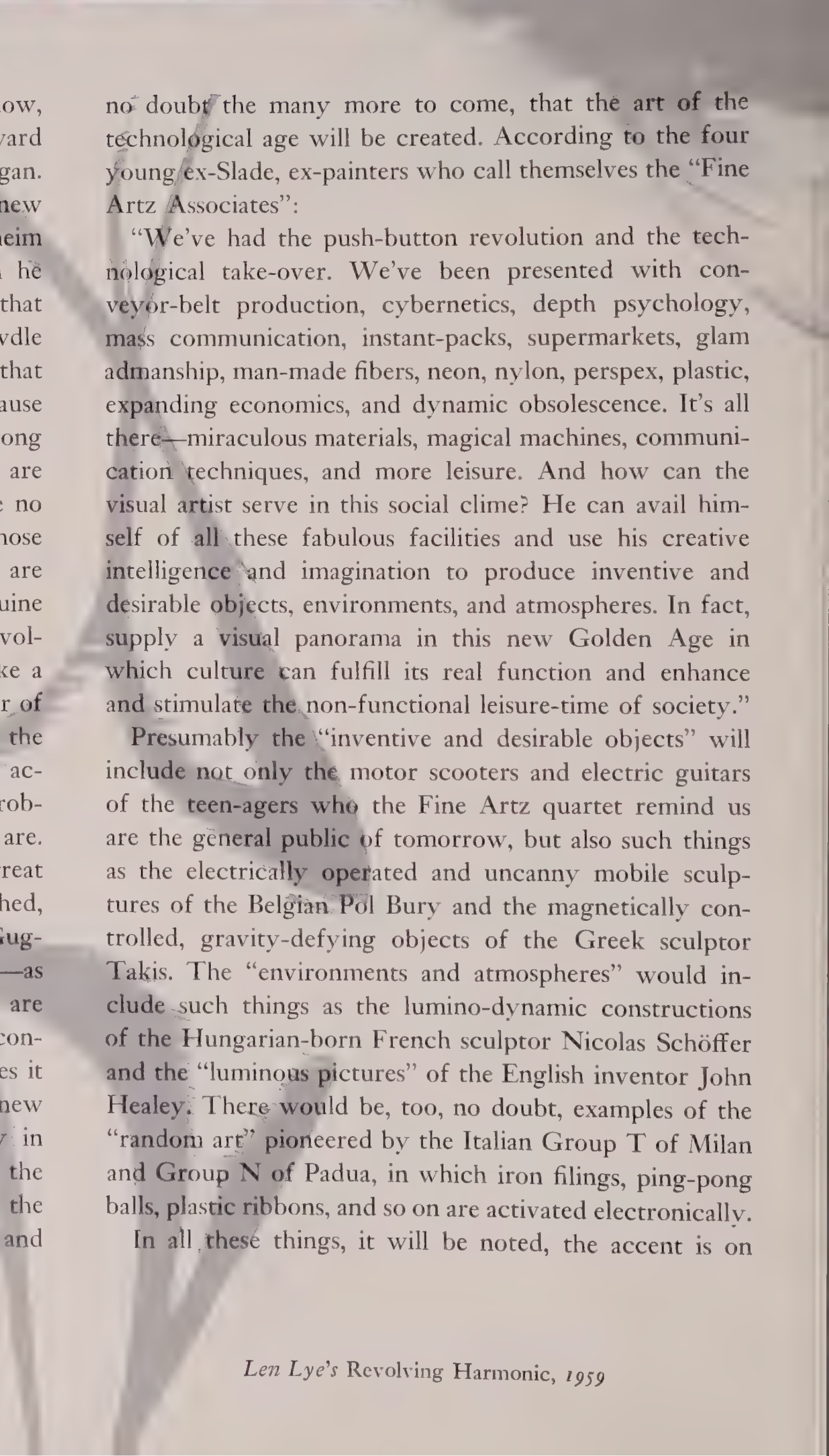
survives today. Far from being finished or lying fallow, the art of the twentieth century is now working toward a revolution far greater than that with which it began. In the apparent chaos of today's art the germ of the new art is pulsating. In failing to detect it, Miss Guggenheim has aligned herself with the layman who, although he makes no objection to being rushed along by science that he does not understand, demands that art should dawdle along with him, explaining itself as it goes. To say that we have "painting that isn't painting any more" because artists are trying too hard to be original is the wrong answer to the wrong question. The only artists who are trying to be original are the spurious artists who are no more a part of the vital body of living art than are those who, in the second half of the twentieth century, are still producing "impressionist" landscapes. The genuine artist does not strive to be original, he is original involuntarily. If he is young, his originality may well take a form that people of Miss Guggenheim's generation, or of mine, find difficult to accept. Rather than accuse the artist of insincerity or of trying too hard, we should acknowledge that, if only because of his youth, he is probably nearer in spirit to the art of the future than we are.

Experience ought to have taught us that in the great technological age into which we are now being pushed, art will be at least as different from the art of Miss Guggenheim's beloved old men—Picasso, Ernst, Miró—as theirs was from that of their grandfathers' day. We are still inclined today to regard the artist's use of unconventional materials as a gimmick, and so in many cases it undoubtedly is. But there is in this search for new materials a strong pointer to the fundamental way in which the art of the future will differ from that of the present. Technology has already made available to the artist a great variety of new media, and it is in these, and no doubt the many more to come, that the art of the technological age will be created. According to the four young ex-Slade, ex-painters who call themselves the "Fine Artz Associates":

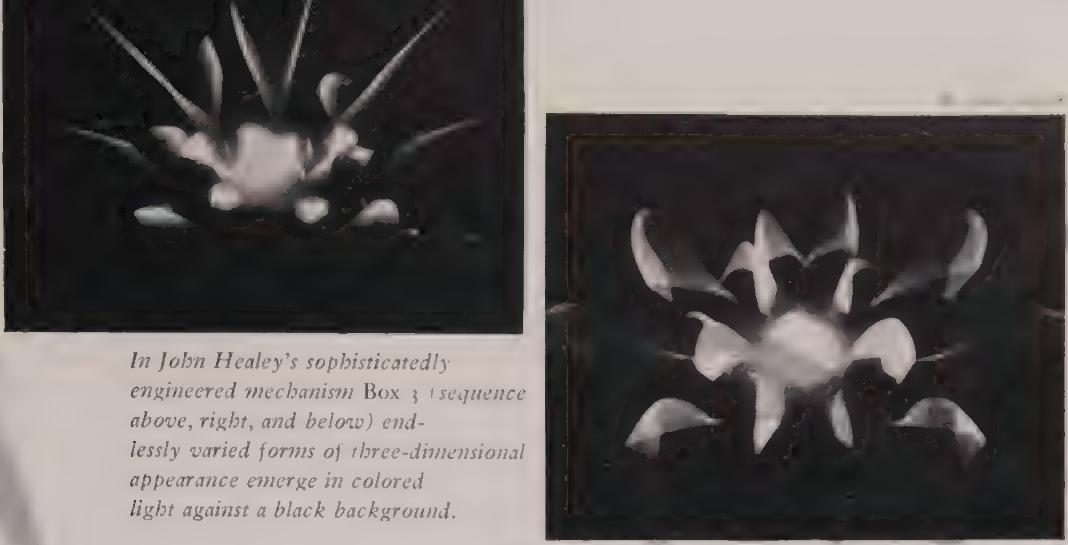
"We've had the push-button revolution and the technological take-over. We've been presented with conveyor-belt production, cybernetics, depth psychology, mass communication, instant-packs, supermarkets, glam admanship, man-made fibers, neon, nylon, perspex, plastic, expanding economics, and dynamic obsolescence. It's all there—miraculous materials, magical machines, communication techniques, and more leisure. And how can the visual artist serve in this social clime? He can avail himself of all these fabulous facilities and use his creative intelligence and imagination to produce inventive and desirable objects, environments, and atmospheres. In fact, supply a visual panorama in this new Golden Age in which culture can fulfill its real function and enhance and stimulate the non-functional leisure-time of society."

Presumably the "inventive and desirable objects" will include not only the motor scooters and electric guitars of the teen-agers who the Fine Artz quartet remind us are the general public of tomorrow, but also such things as the electrically operated and uncanny mobile sculptures of the Belgian Pol Bury and the magnetically controlled, gravity-defying objects of the Greek sculptor Takis. The "environments and atmospheres" would include such things as the lumino-dynamic constructions of the Hungarian-born French sculptor Nicolas Schöffer and the "luminous pictures" of the English inventor John Healey. There would be, too, no doubt, examples of the "random art" pioneered by the Italian Group T of Milan and Group N of Padua, in which iron filings, ping-pong balls, plastic ribbons, and so on are activated electronically.

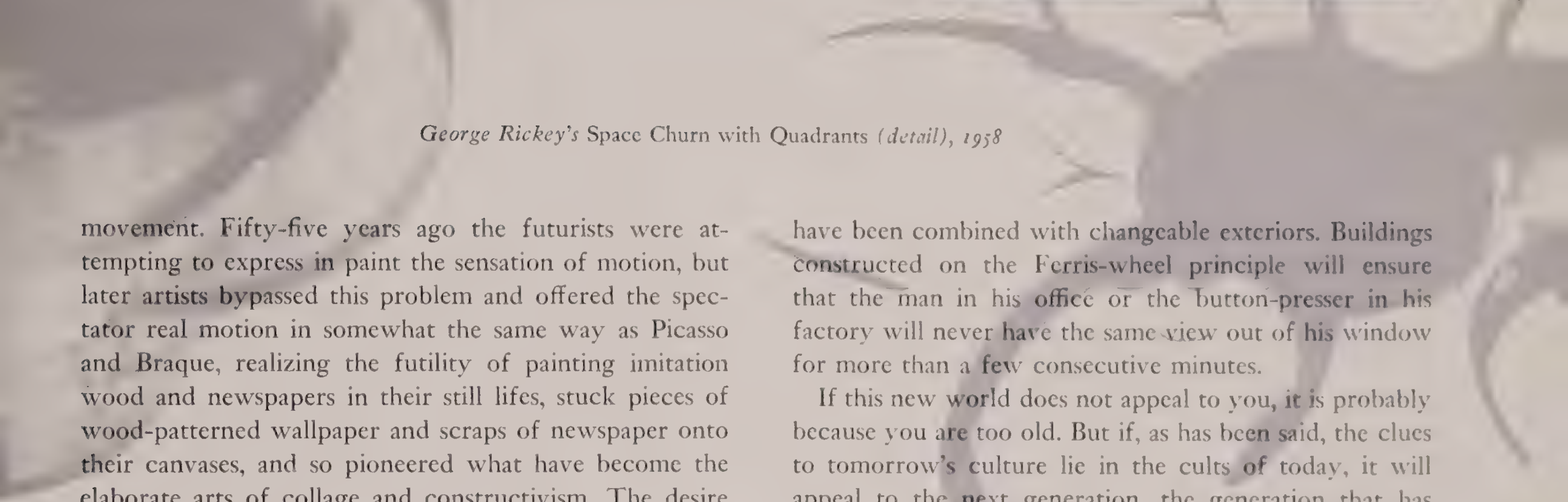
In all these things, it will be noted, the accent is on



Len Lye's Revolving Harmonic, *1959*



In John Healey's sophisticatedly engineered mechanism Box 3 *(sequence above, right, and below) endlessly varied forms of three-dimensional appearance emerge in colored light against a black background.*



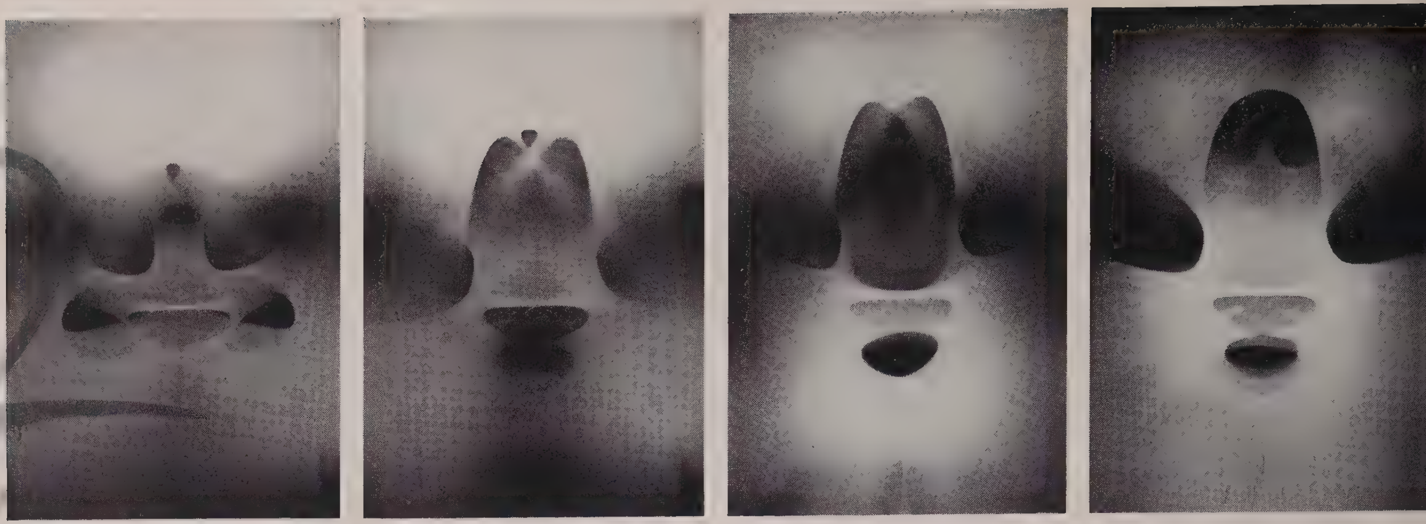
George Rickey's Space Churn with Quadrants *(detail), 1958*

movement. Fifty-five years ago the futurists were attempting to express in paint the sensation of motion, but later artists bypassed this problem and offered the spectator real motion in somewhat the same way as Picasso and Braque, realizing the futility of painting imitation wood and newspapers in their still lifes, stuck pieces of wood-patterned wallpaper and scraps of newspaper onto their canvases, and so pioneered what have become the elaborate arts of collage and constructivism. The desire for motion in art goes much deeper than that of a few avant-gardists looking for a new gimmick to bring them publicity. The development of moving sculpture, from the first mobiles of Alexander Calder thirty-five years ago, and the development of light-pictures since the attempts still earlier in the century to create "color music," will be regarded by the twenty-first century as the most important contributions made to art in the twentieth, not even excluding cubism.

What was thought by most of us to be the mumbo jumbo of a few young exhibitionists, when a few years ago we first heard talk of environmental art and saw exhibitions which enveloped us in a maze of outsize canvases, will be seen to have been prophetic. But instead of a temporary environment of painted canvases, there will be an everyday environment in which there are moving sculptures on every street corner, vast ever-changing color abstractions projected on the sides of great buildings (and on the insides, too, as an alternative to music while you work), electronic "perpetual motion" machines to entertain you at the air-bus stop and at the Channel Tunnel stations, and electro-magnetic art objects in the hospital waiting rooms (we shall always have *them*) to induce a hypnotic calm in the patient waiting to have a worn-out limb replaced. The passion for movement will also spread to architecture. Changeable interiors will have been combined with changeable exteriors. Buildings constructed on the Ferris-wheel principle will ensure that the man in his office or the button-presser in his factory will never have the same view out of his window for more than a few consecutive minutes.

If this new world does not appeal to you, it is probably because you are too old. But if, as has been said, the clues to tomorrow's culture lie in the cults of today, it will appeal to the next generation, the generation that has been brought up from birth on television and motor scooters, space travel and Cinemascope and big-beat music, for whom silence is leaden and not to move is to be dead. Theirs, the Fine Artz men tell us, will be a "fab, kandy-colored, leisure-loving, kustom-built for komfort, super-styled and slickline bright new world."

You are glad you will not be here to see it? But this is only the immediate future. Many artists today are looking much farther ahead. The sculptor Constant Nieuwenhuys, for example, visualizes a world in which: "since all the work will be done by machines, the new man will be free to spend his life, like a nomad, traveling through the ever-changing New Babylon and sampling some of the intense and gratifying experiences it will provide. The energies now devoted to work will be spent on the development of man's creative capacities in the world-wide city which will be a sort of enormous playground. It will consist basically of flexible living sectors, with open spaces in between for parks, agricultural lands, and gardens, covering the entire surface of the earth. The environment will alter according to the desires and activities of the passing Homo Ludens. In this flux of change and movement the common creative force will create a collective mood and atmosphere (something like collective poetry), which will be both the aim and the justification of the life of this new nomadic race."



In Sequencia Visual S-52 *by the Brazilian artist Abraham Palatnik, regulated arrangements projected on a glass screen present a sequence of shifting patterns of colored light. The time may come when such effects, grown large and demonstrated publicly, will provide a background for our daily activities.*

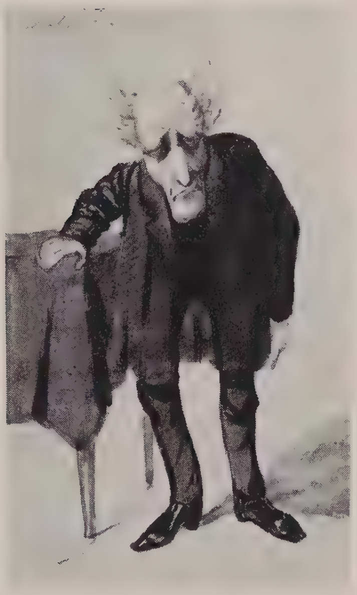
What will happen to art as we move forward to this New Babylon? Opinions differ. To those who believe that art is a substitute for something lacking in life, a religion, a sublimation of a desire that is not directly satisfied, it seems logical to suppose that in an ideal world, art (like the state in Marx's ideal communism) will wither away. That great pioneer of abstract art, Piet Mondrian, expressed this when he said, "Art will disappear as life gains more equilibrium." But the idea is challenged, surprisingly perhaps, by the Marxist philosopher Ernst Fischer. He rejects the belief that art is only a substitute, and encouragingly asserts that "art was not merely necessary in the past but will always remain so." On the other hand, if it is true that, as Fischer puts it, "an artist can only experience something which his time and his social conditions have to offer," then certainly the art of the New Babylon will be vastly different from anything we know today. Obviously, the precious-object-in-a-gilded-frame concept of art will long ago have died and been forgotten (perhaps the present art boom marks the beginning of its end). The several arts will no longer be separate from each other or from science. Art, with a capital A, will be collectively created and it will be for collective delectation.

So much for speculation. But one thing we may be sure of—that the art game as we know it, the "personal art-dealing, private art-collecting, and individual artist-enterprising of personalistic, privateering art" will disappear as life gains more equilibrium. But keep calm. There is no need yet for alarm, all you actual and would-be collectors, investors, dealers, auctioneers, experts, critics, art historians, museum wallahs, art-gossip mongers, forgers, fakers, fiddlers, publicists, phony art teachers, culture-hawkers, and innumberable other art et ceteras. The New Babylon won't be coming for a long, long time. When? Poet Stanley Brouwn puts it (pessimistically, I think) at

4000 A.D.
When Science and Art are entirely
Melted together to something new
When the people will have lost their
Remembrance and thus will have
No past, only future.
When they will have to discover everything
Every moment again and again
When they will have lost their need for
Contact with others . . .
. . . Then they will live in a world of only
Color, Light, Space, Time, Sounds and Movement
Then color light space time
Sounds and movement will be free
No Music
No Theatre
No Art
No
There will be SOUND
COLOR
LIGHT
SPACE
TIME
MOVEMENT

Robert Wraight is the former art critic of The Tatler. *He now runs his own gallery in Cambridge, England, and lives in a Tudor cottage in, as he puts it, "a permanently bent position because the ceilings are so low." This article will appear in his new book* The Art Game, *to be published shortly by Simon and Schuster, Inc.*

The Complete Romantic



Chateaubriand was the greatest lover,
greatest writer, and greatest philosopher
of his age—or so he thought,
and the world was inclined to agree

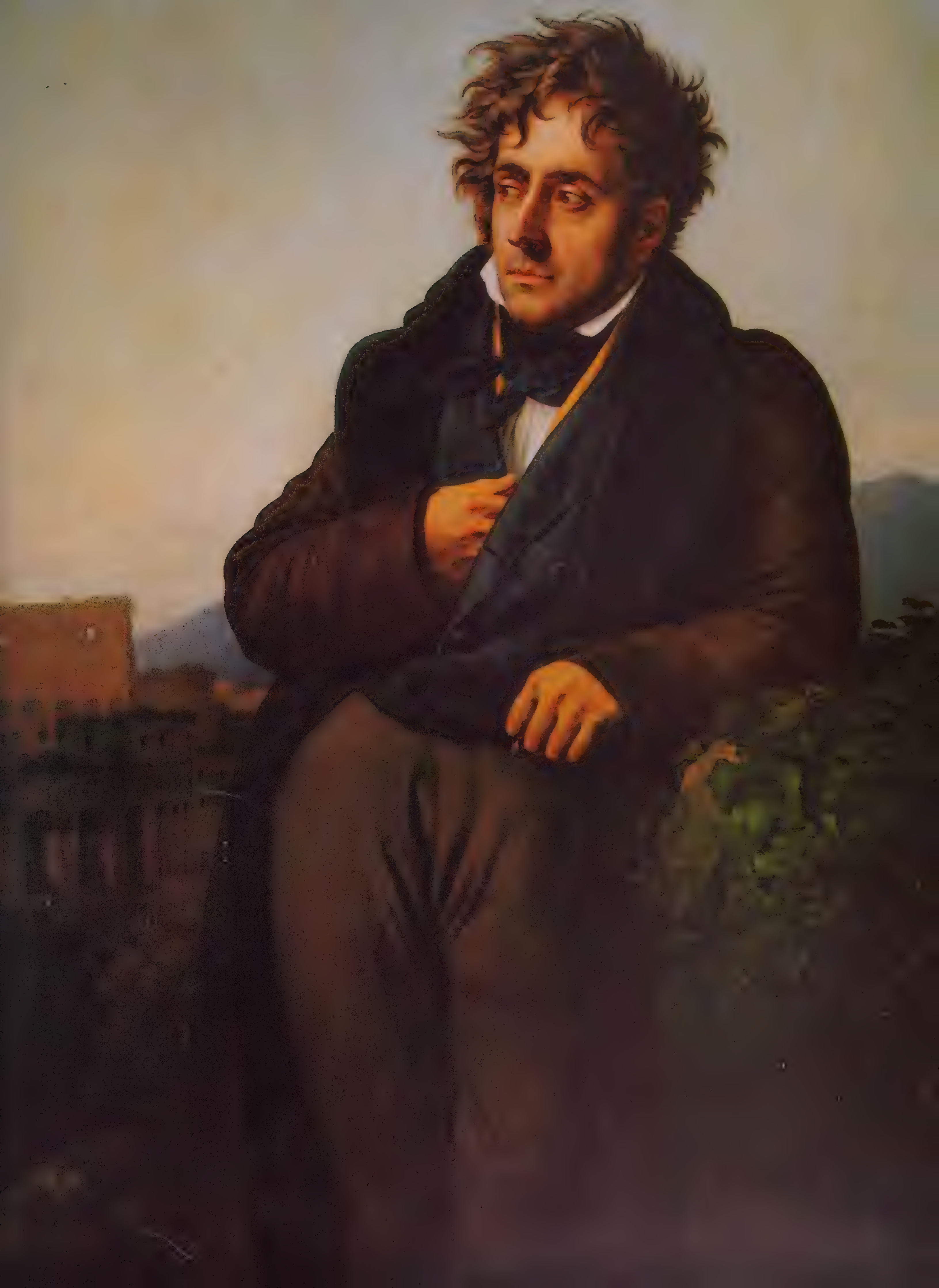
By PETER GAY

Chateaubriand was not a genius. He was gifted—more than one of his biographers has called him "a born writer"—and he was sensitive and intelligent. But his work has not lasted. His novels are exotic and, at their best, moving, but they often fall into sentimental gush and sheer absurdity. His religious apologetics are ambitious, but they are derivative, mediocre in reasoning, extravagant, and in doubtful taste. His political conduct, though courageous, rested on archaic and chaotic principles or, rather, on sheer nostalgic feeling for a past that had never existed. His famous autobiography, the *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*, swarms with vivid portraits of the great men he had known and great events he had witnessed. It evokes, in a style at once lush and precise, an old man's feeling for his childhood and youth; but this book, too, is riddled with faults: even sympathetic critics have been compelled to call it "uneven" and "self-centered" and to lament the bathos, the willful inaccuracies, and the frequent trivialities that alternate with passages of real power.

Yet this uneven writer dominated the literary scene in France in the first half of the nineteenth century. Born in 1768, he was a child of the Old Regime and always cherished its aristocratic values, its traditionalism; he achieved fame and influence in the time of Napoleon's Consulate and long survived Napoleon to remain a towering figure in the Restoration and the July Monarchy. When he died in 1848, in the midst of revolutionary violence, he was a national institution.

How are we to explain such a career? Granted his talents, how could his work —voluminous, varied, but flawed at every turn—secure him such celebrity? Doubtless Chateaubriand had his merits: he was stimulating when others were dull, versatile when others were narrowly specialized, he spoke his mind when

The portrait opposite, painted in 1811, shows Chateaubriand as a thoughtful and sensitive romantic hero; less appealing aspects of his character are seen in a caricature above, done in 1847 by his enemy Prosper Mérimée.

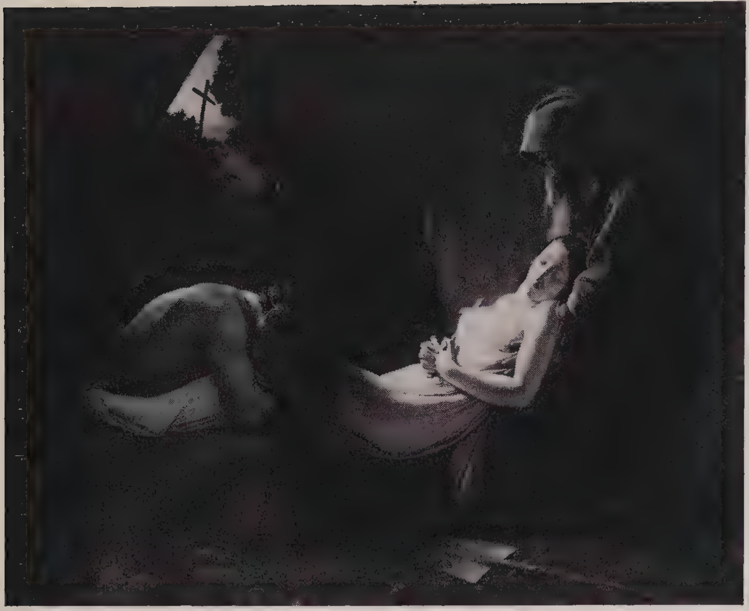


others cringed, he worked hard when others were lazy. In brief, he was above his time; his eminence (as Marx once said about John Stuart Mill) was due to the flatness of the surrounding landscape. But this is not the whole explanation. Chateaubriand did not simply transcend his age; with superb tact and a shrewdness that commands admiration, he also represented it: he gave the public what it wanted. He followed taste when he seemed to be leading it, because he was more lucid, more aware, than the audience whose wishes he gratified. He knew what the public wanted before it knew itself, and what the public wanted in the aftermath of the French Revolution was a firm repudiation of the principles of the Enlightenment, a celebration of religiosity, and a glorification not of clarity or reason but of night, doomed love, the primitive—in a word, romanticism.

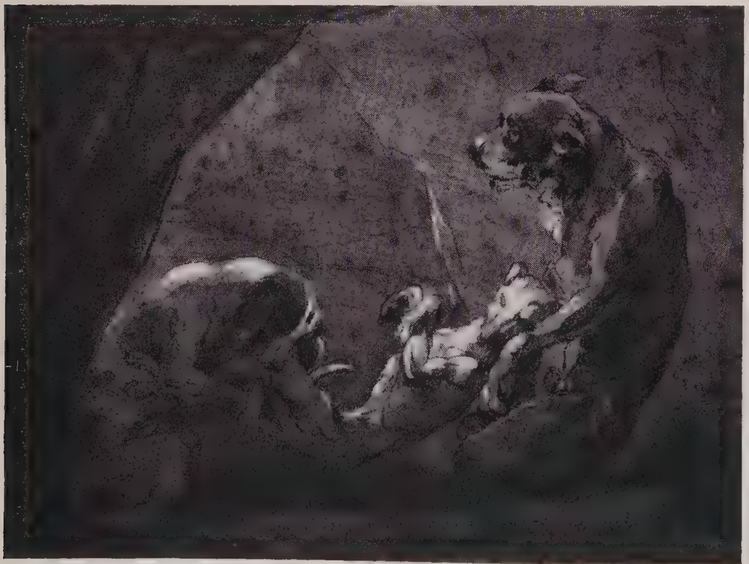
Everything about Chateaubriand was romantic, including his life. His life, in fact, was the most romantic thing about him, and his work was merely its reflection. Sometimes one gets the feeling that Chateaubriand lived as he did so that he might have something to write about. But the romantic character of his life began long before he had any literary control over it. He was born in the old Breton town of Saint-Malo, and his earliest memories —or so he often said—were of the sea and its restless, ever-repeated sound, which he liked to depict in his writings. His parents might have come out of a Gothic novel. His father, grim and greedy, was on bad terms with his wife and perpetually, obsessively, concerned with his aristocratic status; his mother was ugly, religious, and stubborn, and their life together was silent, oppressed, melancholy. The family, like all families then, was large, and François-René de Chateaubriand, born on September 4, 1768, the last of many children, was neglected in favor of an elder son. It did not matter—or so Chateaubriand later claimed—for he had his nurse and his elder sister, Lucile, who was as unloved as René and as wayward. They brought him up, as did other, less neglectful relatives whom he could visit. Besides, from a romantic writer's point of view, his childhood, odd, erratic, and empty of love, could be an advantage; at least Chateaubriand thought so, although a psychologist might disagree. He filled the void with his imagination, he escaped the darkness of his home by long, lonely walks in the forests and by the sea.

Once away from home, his native talents emerged. He was a good student in his schools and a good companion to his schoolmates. Then, in 1786, his father decided his career for him and the young Chevalier de Chateaubriand joined the French army. The Revolution was just about to break. When it came, most of Chateaubriand's fellow officers emigrated either to join or form counterrevolutionary forces that would crush the incredible uprising at home. Chateaubriand did not follow

LOUVRE—GIRAUDON



Girodet's painting of the funeral of Chateaubriand's Indian heroine Atala (above) was too sentimental even for a romantic age. The parody below restages the scene with dogs instead of people.



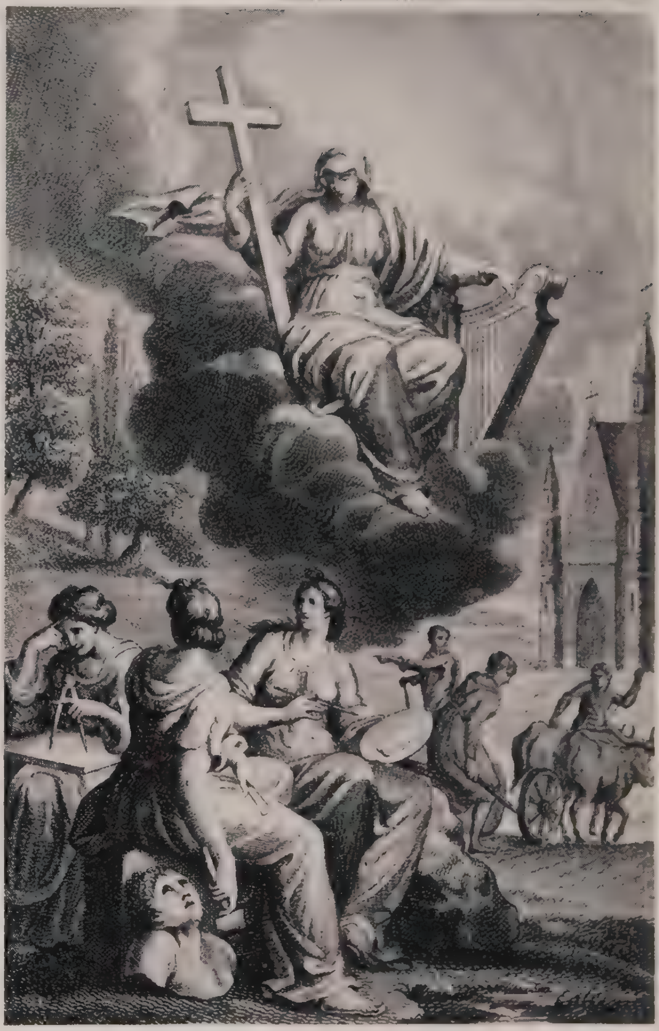
BIBLIOTHEQUE NATIONALE—SERVICE PHOTOGRAPHIQUE

suit: "The King's cause," he said, "is lost, and there will be no counterrevolution. I will do what the Puritans [sic] did who emigrated to Virginia in the seventeenth century; I will go away into the forests and that is better than going to Coblenz. Why emigrate only from France? I am going to emigrate from the world; either I shall die on the way, or I shall come back something more than I am now." They were prophetic words. In July, 1791, he landed at Baltimore and discovered for himself the America he had read about with such fascination. When he returned to France half a year later, he was, as he had predicted, something more than he had been; much of the material that would fill his books derived from the things that he had seen, heard, or imagined during his American travels.

Early 1792 was a bad time for an aristocrat on French soil, and Chateaubriand did not stay long. By summer he was where he had vowed he would not go—at Coblenz, with the forces of the counterrevolution. It was during his short stay with his family, now scattered by marriages and impoverished by the anti-aristocratic legislation of the Revolution, that Chateaubriand completed the one unromantic transaction of his long romantic life: he got married, in the old French way, to a girl with a reputation for enormous wealth and of recent nobility; Chateaubriand, without funds, needed the first and could repair the second, for the Chateaubriand family went back to the Crusades. It was a loveless union on his part; Céleste, tart, witty, and in her own way a match for the budding writer, loved her husband through many hard and, for her, often lonely years, marked by his frequent infidelity. Chateaubriand sought with other women what he could not find with his own wife—beauty, the charm of a hostess, and perhaps most of all the variety that only a succession of mistresses can bring.

For the moment, however, all this was in the future; after four months of marriage, Chateaubriand was off to join the royalist forces while his wife stayed behind. In the years that followed—years of the Terror, the Thermidorian Reaction, and the Directory—Chateaubriand fought bravely and wandered across Europe. He had many encounters, romantic enough even for him; for seven years he lived in England, penniless, sharing his starvation diet and miserable hovels with fellow refugees, composing an ambitious theoretical work on revolutions, and, heedless of his wife at home, falling in love. One love affair stands out for its pathos and its authenticity—Chateaubriand was not yet the hardened celebrity transferring his affections at will. In his poverty he had become a tutor, and one of his charges was Charlotte Ives, daughter of a provincial parson. Chateaubriand visited the Ives household often, borrowed the parson's books, listened to the lovely Charlotte sing, and generally ingratiated himself. The result was inevitable: Charlotte,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 112



An engraving from Chateaubriand's Le Génie du Christianisme *shows the spirit of Christianity seated comfortably on a billowing cloud, inspiring science, art, and agriculture.*

Out of the wreckage of Europe's darkest years the first and greatest of the Holy Roman Emperors built the framework for a modern world

THE AGE OF CHARLEMAGNE

By REGINE PERNOUD

The talisman of Charlemagne (left), a bejeweled reliquary now containing what purports to be a fragment of the true Cross, is said to have hung around Charlemagne's neck when his tomb was first opened in A.D. *1000. Opposite, a ninth-century bronze equestrian statuette represents a Carolingian ruler who is probably Charlemagne himself, since the head resembles his portrait on contemporary coins. The pose is that of an earlier Roman emperor; the mustache, hairdo, and garb are those of a Frankish warrior-king.*

KAROLVS IMP AVG

An early ninth-century silver coin with a portrait of Charlemagne

In the history of the Western world three great heroes have at separate times held sway over most of the European continent—Caesar, Charlemagne, and Napoleon. Of the three, it may be argued, Charlemagne has had the most profound and lasting influence on the course of human events. Lord Bryce, writing about a century ago, had no doubt about it. The coronation of Charlemagne as the first Holy Roman Emperor on Christmas Day A.D. 800 was, to quote from Bryce's own rich, rounded periods, "one of those very few events of which, taking them singly, it may be said that if they had not happened, the history of the world would have been different." It was from that moment, when Charlemagne was acclaimed emperor, wrote Bryce, that modern history began.

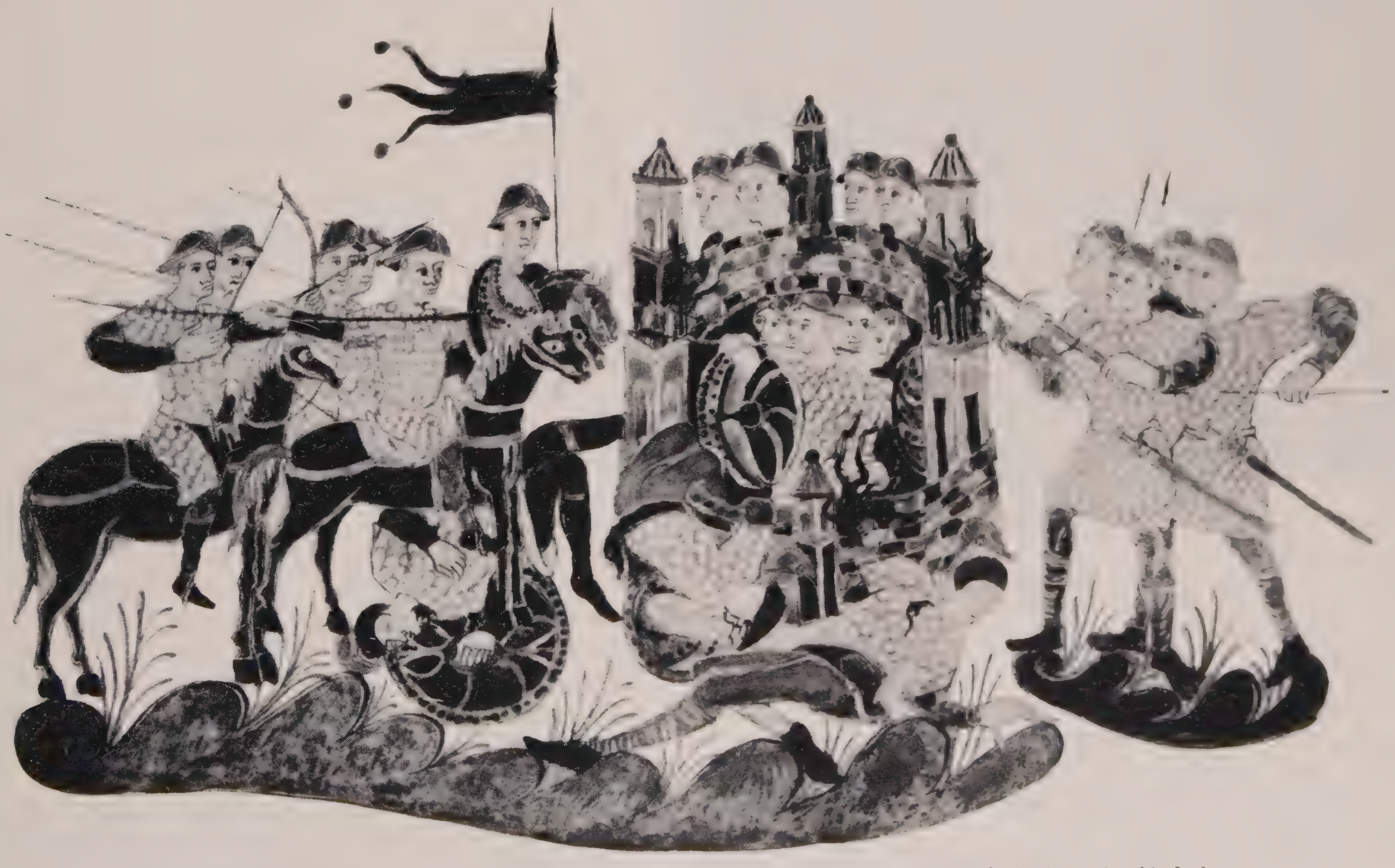
Be that as it may, those large statements serve to remind us that the historical importance of Charlemagne's reign was far greater than its material achievements. Within a few generations after his death, in 814, the great empire he had so laboriously pieced together was already a shambles. In his later years the aging emperor is said to have wept at the thought of the menacing advances of the Vikings along the northern and western fringes of his realm. Now, ever more boldly, the dreaded longboats with their high dragon prows were slipping up the Seine, the Loire, and other waterways, spreading terror and destroying every vestige of imperial authority wherever their raids reached. Paris itself was sacked in 845. A year later, Saracens raiding from the south attacked Rome and violated St. Peter's and the tombs of the Apostles. Then nomadic hordes of Magyars pressed in to ravage the eastern borders of the empire. And, in the meantime, Charlemagne's heirs and descendants were incapable of maintaining any semblance of political unity within the crumbling empire. Once again Europe divided into a dismal miscellany of contending and often hostile forces.

Yet the great emperor had left an indelible impress on the minds of men. It was in the generations of dissolution following his death that legends of fabulous grandeur started to cluster around his memory. He was remembered as "the Emperor with the Flowery Beard," gigantic in size and two hundred years old, who was held in awe from Britain to Baghdad; and as the invincible Christian conqueror, inspired by angels, whose sword *Joyeuse* had contained the point of the lance used in the Passion. He was credited with miraculous prowess and implausible virtue. According to some chronicles he would arise from the dead to vanquish the enemies of his realm; according to others he did in fact so rise to take part in the Crusades. He soon became the center of an epic cycle of romance, best remembered in the *Chanson de Roland*, that spread enchantment throughout the Middle Ages and down the centuries to our own day. In 1165 he was even transformed into a saint by the antipope Paschal III; and, to reduce his legend to the most elementary, everyday reality, the day of Saint Charlemagne, the "inventor of schools," was a cherished holiday for the school children of France until recent times.

However extravagant their growth, the legends about Charlemagne were rooted in historical realities, and these, even in the most factual chronicles, often enough have an epic quality that challenges the imagination. In 772, the first year of his reign as sole king of the Franks, the young warrior led his troops through the dark forests of Germany on the first of his many campaigns against the fierce Saxons of the North. On their Holy Heath in Westphalia, their most revered sanctuary, Charlemagne cut down the Irminsul, the wooden column that stood as an ancient pagan symbol of the very bearer of the universe—a gesture as expressive, if not as decisive, as that of Alexander the Great when he cut the Gordian knot in Phrygia more than a millennium earlier. At the end of his career, it is told, Charlemagne was accompanied on all his royal progresses by an elephant, Abul Abbas by name —the most prized among the lavish gifts from the Caliph Harun al-Rashid, who was to be immortalized in *The Arabian Nights* as Charlemagne was in the *Chanson de Roland.* To the Middle Ages the elephant was a beast of fabulous propensities, and when Abul Abbas died on one of Charlemagne's last campaigns against the Danes, it was taken as an omen of darkest import. The campaign was in fact indecisive, and the emperor did in fact die three years later.

These episodes, selected from the start and the finish of his reign, are more or less typical of Charlemagne's life story as it has come down to us. In the historical record as in the legend, he almost always appears as a figure somewhat larger than life. Actually, judging from observations made when his skeleton was examined about a century ago, he must have been around six feet four inches tall (in spite of legend, he was apparently beardless). A man of immense energy and strength, he was a superb horseman and an accomplished swimmer. His wives, mistresses, and concubines were numerous, but his amorous indulgences at no time interfered with his conduct of state affairs or his almost incessant military exploits. He was a man of insatiable intellectual curiosity, many-sided in his interests and demanding of those from whom he could learn. Although no verifiable portrait of him has survived, he obviously had a commanding presence. Few men in history, indeed, have displayed such an impressive personality; and it was largely by the force of his personal influence that he gave shape to the trends of his age and direction to things that were to come.

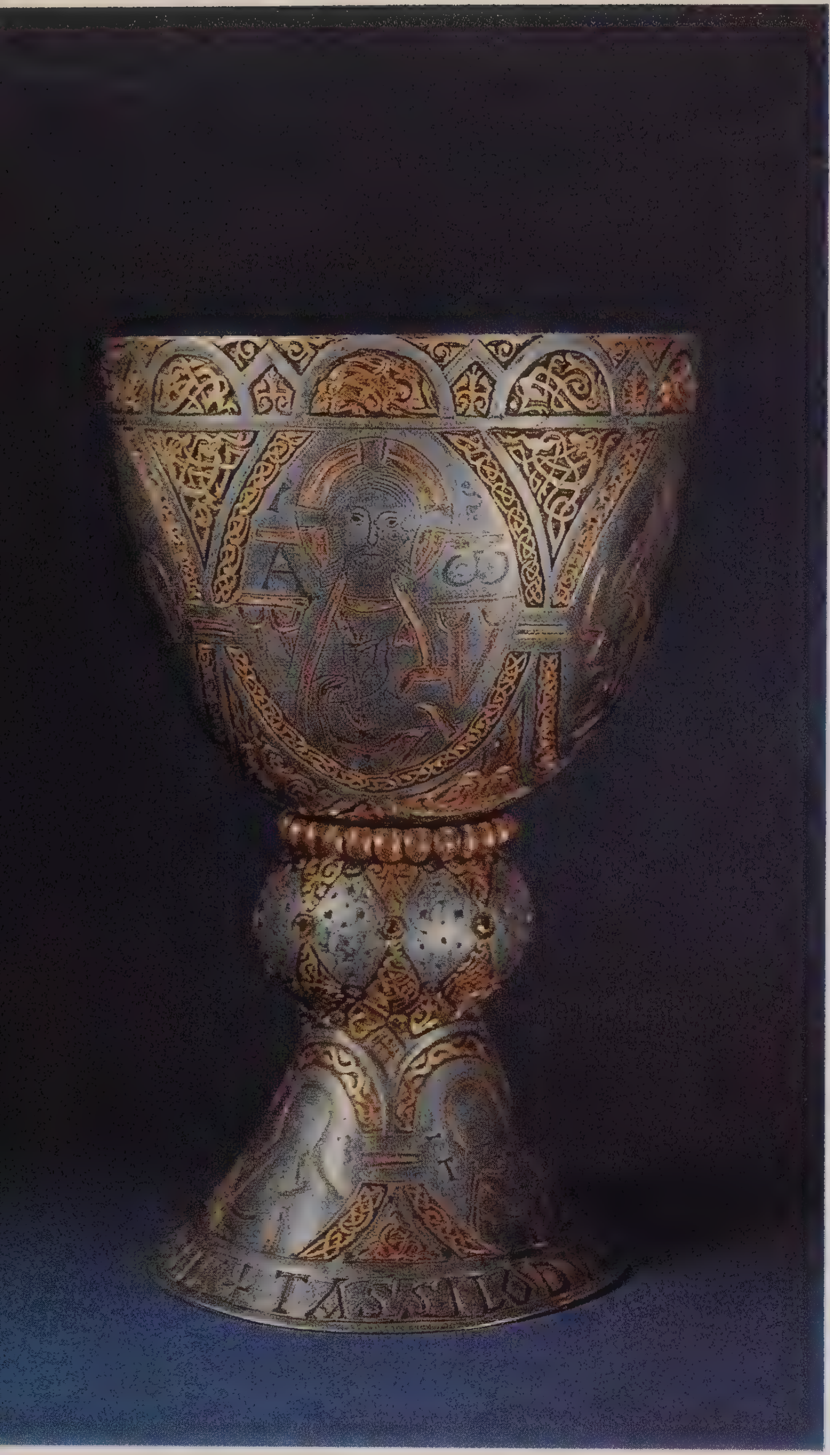
The greatest achievement of that Carolingian age was in effect nothing less than the founding of Europe; that is to say, the welding of the fresh vigor and energy of the Teutonic north to the civilized traditions of the Roman south in the name of the Christian faith. Geographically speaking Europe is not a natural unity; it is rather a physically disparate extension of Asia. But out of the fusion of the Carolingian period there evolved a common European consciousness which, in spite of constant tensions and intermittent bloody ordeals over the centuries since, continues to assert itself. It was in this new Europe, as Henri Pirenne has remarked, that was elaborated the Western civilization which was one day to become that of the whole world. And nothing reveals the greatness of Charlemagne more clearly than the zeal with which



This illustration from a ninth-century psalter shows armored horsemen and foot soldiers besieging a fortified city

STIFTSBIBLIOTHEK ST. GALLEN; OPPOSITE: BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE—CABINET [illegible]

STIFT KREMSMUNSTER



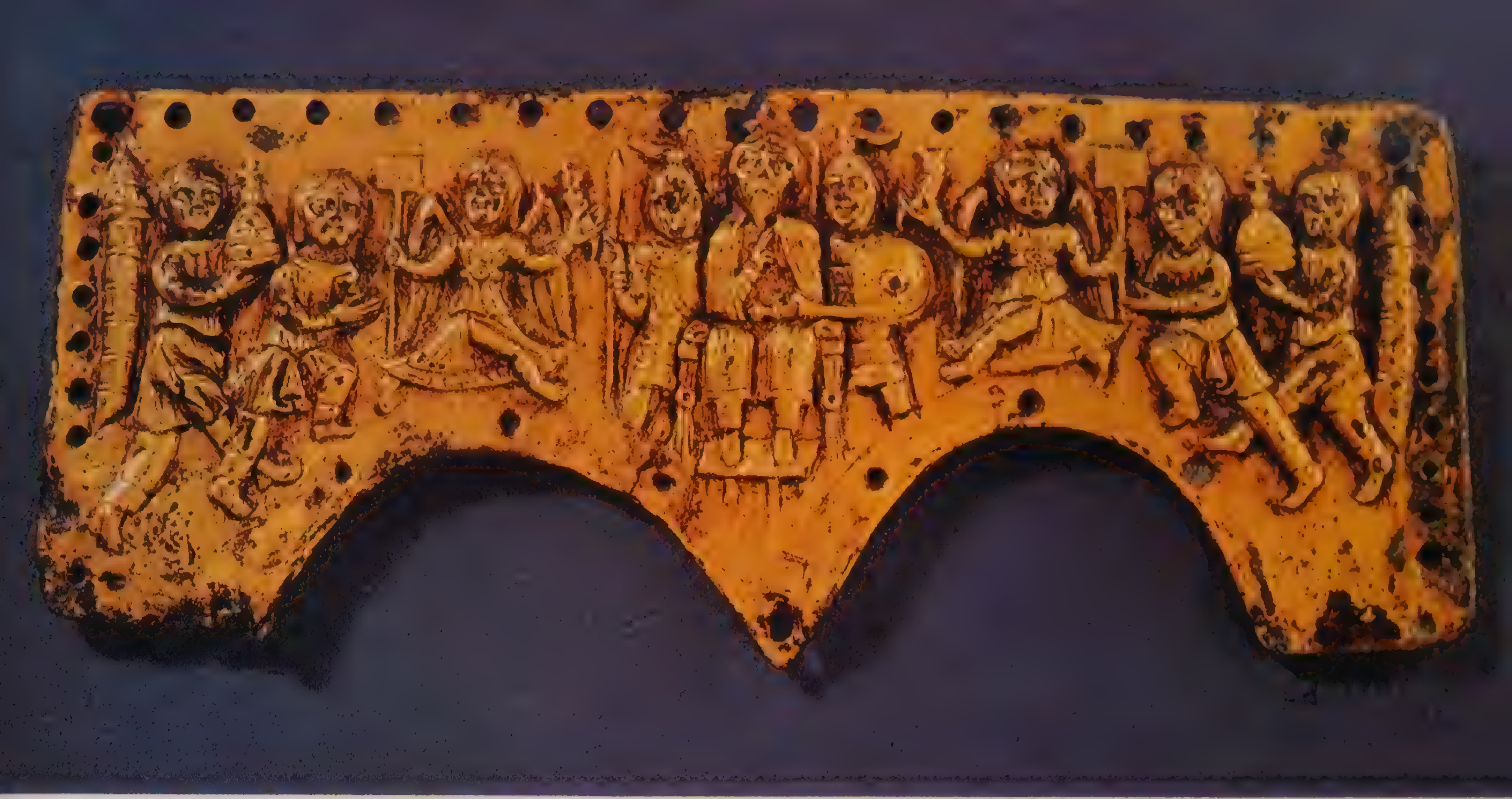
In 777 the Bavarian duke Tassilo III and his wife founded a Benedictine monastery at Kremsmunster, and subsequently presented it with the silvered and gilded copper chalice above, one of the most richly ornamented liturgical objects to survive from the Carolingian period. The interlacing patterns of the background decoration suggest Anglo-Saxon or Celtic workmanship—not surprisingly, since Saint Boniface from Devon had organized the Bavarian church earlier in the eighth century. In 788 Tassilo was brought to trial for alleged infidelities to the Frankish state, and it was at this point that Bavaria was added to Charlemagne's empire.

this almost unlettered warrior attended, supervised, and encouraged the birth of the new and viable culture. Viewed in historical perspective his coronation marked the consolidation of this achievement. The ceremony changed nothing in fact; but it did give formal recognition to Charlemagne as the Christian emperor in the West and a rival of the Byzantine emperor in the East.

It is also true that much that Charlemagne accomplished had been initiated by others before his accession to power. Indeed the foundations upon which he built so splendidly had been laid long before his birth. History is constantly breaking out of the compartments assigned to it for the sake of convenience by historians, revealing new continuities with both past and future. So, if we settle on a birth date for the Carolingian age, it involves a fairly arbitrary selection. Nevertheless, the year 732 marks a sharp turning point in the destinies of the Frankish state, a point to which the ascendancy of Charlemagne can be directly traced. It was in this year that Charles Martel, grandfather of the emperor-to-be and then the presiding administrator for the helpless Merovingian king, checked the advancing Saracens at a great battle near Poitiers. By chance this crucial encounter took place precisely one century after the death of Mohammed. In the course of that hundred years the fanatically militant followers of the Prophet had overrun Asia and Africa, from the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic, gaining recruits as they progressed; they had crossed over into Spain and conquered the kingdom of the Visigoths; and, aided by large hordes of converted Berbers from North Africa, they had then swarmed over the Pyrenees.

The fear provoked by their deep penetration into what is now France was real and desperate; the shock of relief that followed their repulse reverberated down the years to come—echoes can be found in the much later legends of Charlemagne, who was therein confused with his grandfather as the Christian victor at Poitiers. In any event it was in the wake of this repulse that the line of Charles Martel in the person of his son Pepin, father of Charlemagne, was established to rule the Franks.

More than two centuries before, the Franks forged the first true European state to take shape from the general wreckage that followed the invasion of barbarian tribes and the fall of Rome. With the conversion of their great ruler, Clovis, about 496, and the attendant mass conversion of his followers, the Franks became the stalwart champions of Roman Catholicism north of the Alps, in a continent otherwise given to paganism and, more subtly divisive of Christian authority, Arianism—that widespread form of heresy that denied the true Divinity of Jesus Christ. To this large, central area newly opened to the faith streamed emissaries from papal Rome and, even more important, monks and missionaries from England and



The gilded copper plaque above may have been part of a helmet. Its hammered reliefs depict Agilulf, king of the Lombards from 592 to 615, flanked by armored warriors and floating spirits of victory. They reveal the deterioration of late classical forms in the centuries that followed the fall of Rome.

Ireland. The latter included the most learned and devout men of the time, and at a point when Continental civilization had all but vanished, their work among the Franks and among the heathen beyond the frontiers helped to lay the foundations of a new age.

It is claimed that the greatest of all these Anglo-Saxon pilgrims, Saint Boniface of Crediton, had a deeper influence on the history of Europe than any other Englishman who has ever lived. In any case, it was he, the so-called "Apostle of Germany," who founded the German Church and who sowed the seeds of a new cultural life throughout those dark lands wherever his voice was heard. And when the Merovingian line of Clovis had degenerated beyond any hope of resuscitation, it was he who anointed Pepin with sacral oil, and in the name of Saint Peter, as king of the Franks.

A few years later, Pope Stephen II, with great travail, crossed the Alps and journeyed north to the abbey church of St. Denis where he personally anointed Pepin afresh—and, for good measure, Pepin's two sons, Charles (the future Charlemagne, then twelve years old) and Carloman. He not only anointed them kings of the Franks but proclaimed them "Patricians of the Romans," a title which in effect made them protectors of Rome. Alienated from his titular lord (the Roman emperor at Constantinople) by serious differences in religious policy, threatened by the territorial encroachments of the Lombards in Italy, and harassed by powerful family groups within Rome itself, the Holy Father needed the help which Pepin quickly supplied. In several campaigns Pepin established papal authority over territory that had been usurped by the Lombards—thus laying the foundation of the Papal State, which endured for more than a millennium, and at the same time marking the beginning of the imperial mission of the Carolingians as leaders and organizers of Western Christendom. That the lands thus disposed of were the legitimate possessions of the emperor at Constantinople did not in any way impede the transaction.

Before his death in 768, Pepin had by and large succeeded in consolidating his Frankish kingdom. Although the Lombards were still to cause trouble, their territorial aggression in Italy had been thwarted, and Pepin had placed the northern part of the peninsula under his own protection. The Saracens had finally been driven out of France altogether, and Pepin had added to his realm their earlier holdings in the southwest as well as the duchy of Aquitaine. To the east, Bavaria acknowledged his authority, and the Saxons had been contained along the northern frontier. When, upon the death of his brother and co-heir in 771, Charlemagne—at twenty-nine—became sole king of the Franks, he was already indisputably the strongest ruler in western Europe.

For the next thirty-odd years, by almost incessant warfare, Charlemagne strengthened and amplified his position until his dominions stretched from the Mediterranean and northern Spain to the North Sea, and from the Atlantic to the Elbe and the lower Danube, uniting most of the lands that are now France, West Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, and a good half of Italy. He quickly and finally destroyed the power of the Lombards and assumed for his own purposes the iron crown of that kingdom and all its considerable wealth. In successive bloody campaigns he virtually obliterated the Avars, the savage mounted nomads from the Eurasian steppes who had been the scourge of eastern Europe and who had laid seige to Constantinople itself; and he plundered from their hoards of treasure such riches as the Franks had never seen before. This fabulous loot Charlemagne generously shared with his faithful courtiers and servants, the abbots and bishops of his kingdom, the pope, and even King Offa of Mercia, self-styled monarch of all the English.

The most celebrated of all Charlemagne's campaigns and the most famous of all medieval wars was his ill-fated expedition in 778 against the infidel Saracens of Spain. Although he had recruited a formidable "international" army, including warriors from all parts of his realm, and had been promised the support of Spanish collaborationists, Charlemagne was unable to win a decisive victory; and he soon retreated across the Pyrenees. Here it was, in the defile of Roncesvalles, that the Frankish rear guard was cut to pieces by a guerrilla band of Christian Basques, a misadventure which was not immediately reported with any great emphasis but which grew in story and legend until, as described in the *Chanson de Roland*, it became one of the most popular epic tragedies of all history. Henry Adams wrote that in the later Middle Ages it was a story "chanted by every minstrel—known by heart, from beginning to end, by every man, woman and child, lay or clerical—translated into every tongue—more intensely felt, if possible, in Italy and Spain than in Normandy and England . . ."

Both before and after that debacle, it required eighteen separate campaigns to subdue the Saxons and to force them to baptism in the Christian faith. In the course of one of these, forty-five hundred men were beheaded in a single day, and a third of the rebellious population was resettled in distant places. "After he had thus taken vengeance," the annals calmly recite, "the king went into winter camp at Thionville and there celebrated Christmas and Easter as usual." Although his spiritual advisers reminded him that such butchery and deprivation were not the most persuasive methods of conversion, to Charles these were wars of religion; as the anointed leader of Roman Catholic Christians he fought with the sword for the cross. To this exalted leadership the Holy Father

TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 24

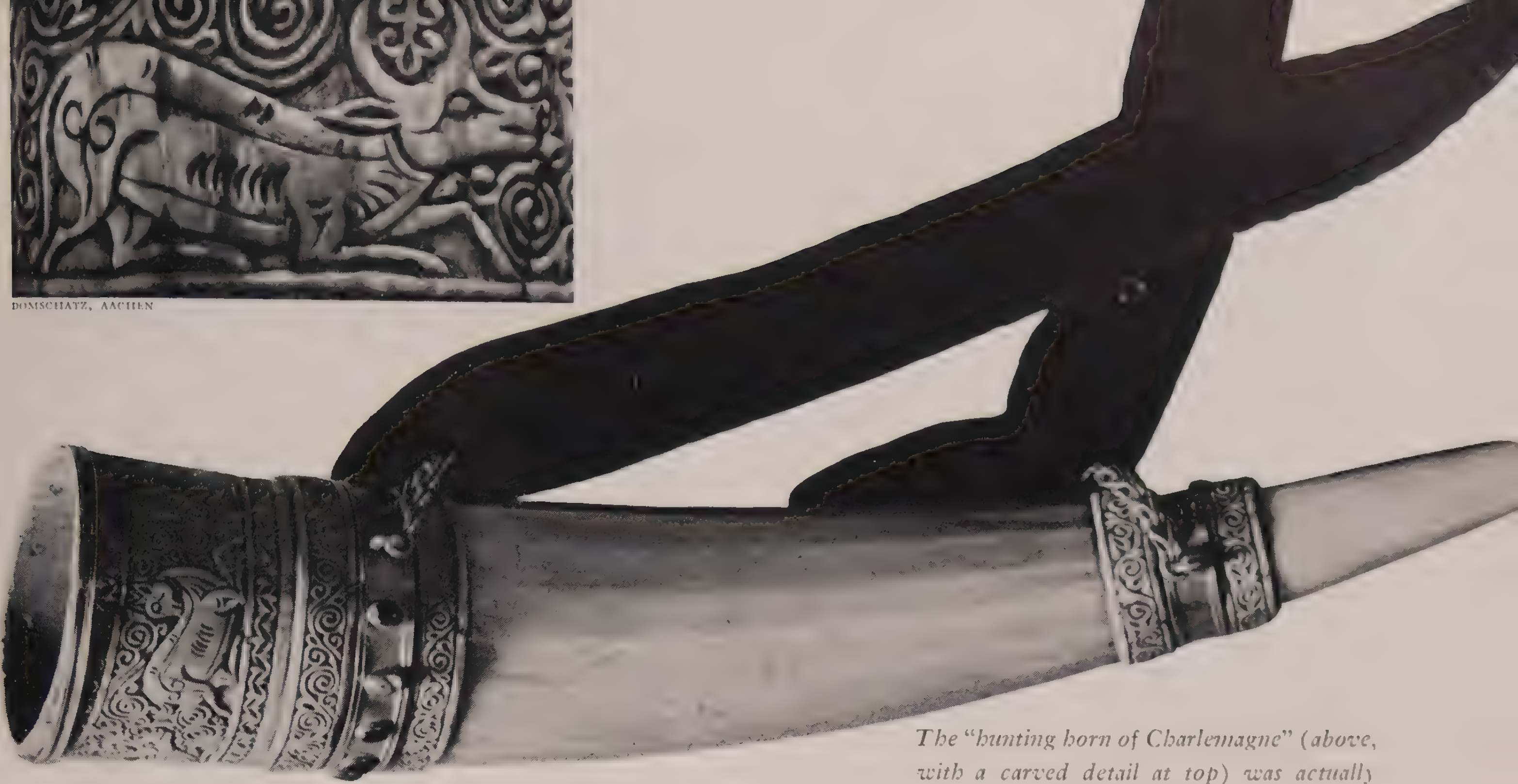
THE SONG OF ROLAND

BILDARCHIV FOTO MARB

A silver-gilt embossed panel from the shrine of Charlemagn at Aachen, commissioned by Frederick Barbarossa and dedicated in 1215, depicts the scene of the emperor weeping ove the slaughter of his knights at Roncesvalles in the Pyrenee

One of the great works of medieval literature is the *Chanson de Roland*, a twelfth-century epic that recounts the destruction of Charlemagne's rear guard at the narrow pass of Roncesvalles in the Pyrenees. The king and his army are returning from a campaign against the Moors of Spain, and twelve valiant knights, among them the king's nephew Count Roland, ride behind them. The Saracens descend on Roland's men and eventually slaughter them all. (In point of fact, the attackers were Basques, but the poet has turned them into infidels.) Roland gallantly refuses to sound his horn for help. Only after the battle, when he and his comrade Oliver are at the point of death, does he wind his horn to call Charlemagne:

When Roland saw the men of France, or dead
Or dying, strewn on every hand, he spake
To Oliver his friend: "God save you, sir,
See you our comrades lying cold in death?
What woe is here for France the beautiful,
Of such men left forlorn! O Charles, great king
And friend, why are you not in Ronceval?
Oliver, comrade, how may we bring word
To Charles the King?" But Oliver spake, and said:
"Let be, good friend, I know not. Only this
I know—to yield us would be worse than death."


DOMSCHATZ, AACHEN

The "hunting horn of Charlemagne" (above, with a carved detail at top) was actually made in Italy from an elephant's tusk, about A.D. *1000, almost two centuries after the emperor's death. It evokes a poignant incident in the* Chanson de Roland *(see below), which was then emerging in its epic form.*

But Roland answered: "I shall wind my horn,
The King will hear it where he marches down
The strait defiles, and so—I pledge you, friend—
The Franks will turn them back." And Oliver said:
"Shame would it be for you, and lifelong shame
For all your lineage. When I pled with you
To call the King, you would not. Now, alas,
It is too late. The fight is on. If now
You wind your horn, it is not hardihood.
Too late! For both your arms are bathed in blood."
And he replied: "They have dealt winsome blows."

* * *

And Roland, with a wild and fearful blast
Winded his horn, so that his temples brake
And from his mouth leapt the bright blood. And Charles
Heard it, and all his soldiers, as they rode
Down to sweet France through valleys far away.
And the King cried: "It is the horn of Roland!
The Franks are fighting." . . .

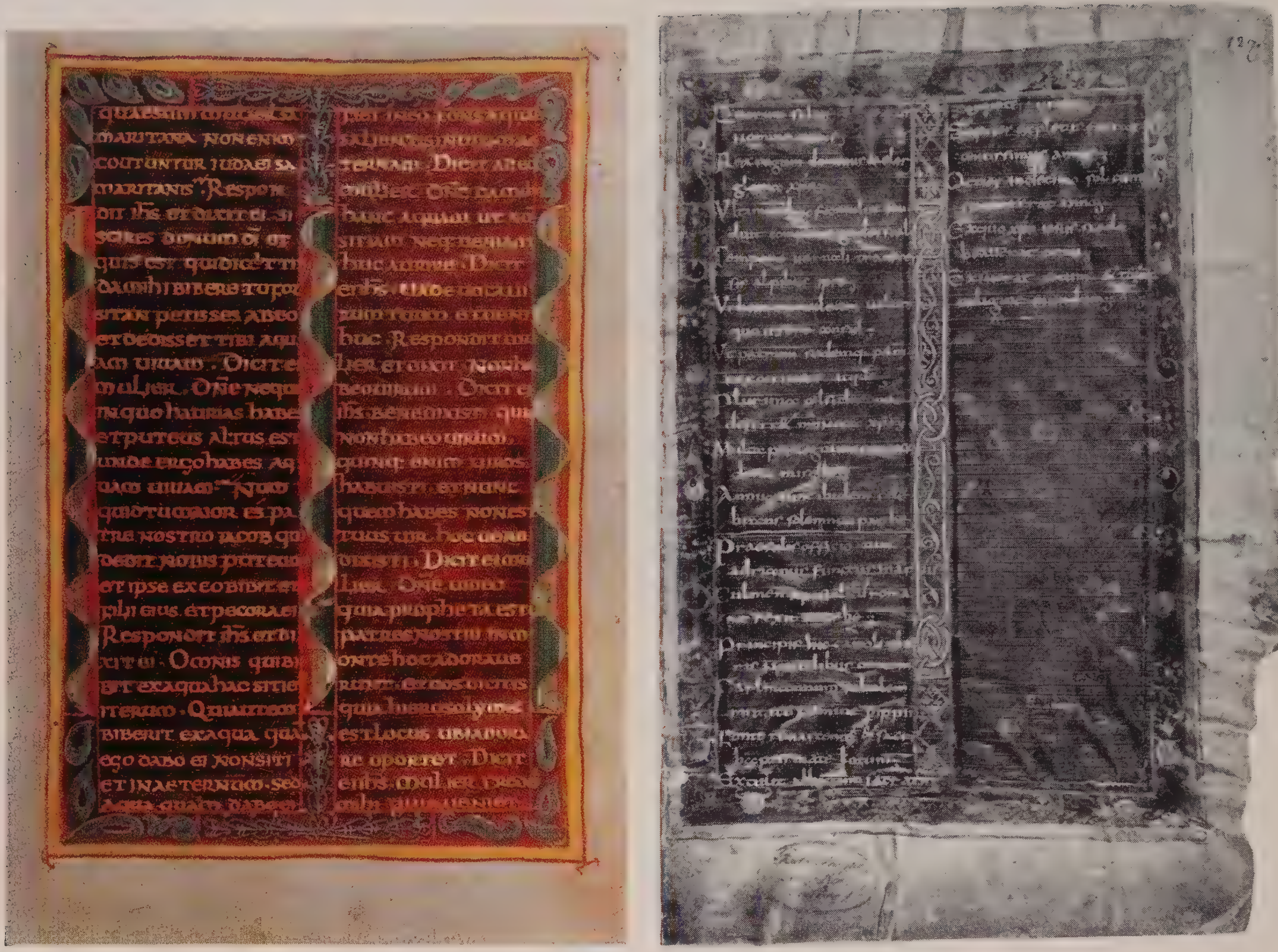
From Roland's lips flowed blood; his temples brake
With the wild blast and fearful. But the King
And all his soldiers heard it from afar.
And the King cried: "The blast is long and strong!"
And Naimon answered: "Ay, for a brave man
Is in distress, is fighting his last fight. . . ."

And so the King drew rein, and loud and clear
The clarions rang; the Franks leapt from their palfreys,
And armed themselves with hauberks of fine steel,
With helms and golden-hilted swords, and spears
Astream with pennons white and red and blue;
Then mounted steeds of war, and spurred apace
Through the defiles, and each to other cried:
"If we but find Count Roland ere he die,
Beside him shall we give good blows." Alas!
To what avail? They will not come in time.

* * *

And when the King had come to Ronceval,
And rode among the dead, he wept, and said
To his chief men: "My lords, rein in your steeds,
For I would fain precede you. Let me find
My nephew Roland ere you follow. Ay—
Years ago, in my vaulted hall at Aix,
Methinks it was a Christmastide—my knights
Were vaunting them of prowess and high deeds
Upon the field of battle, and Roland said
That he should never die in a strange land
Save at the head of all his men, with face
Turned to the foe, and victory in his heart."
He spake, and went before the rest, the space
One throws a spear, and climbed to a high hill.

REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION OF THE MACMILLAN COMPANY FROM [illegible]
TRANSLATED BY FREDERICK BLISS LUQUIENS, COPYRIGHT 1952, THE MACMILLAN COMPANY



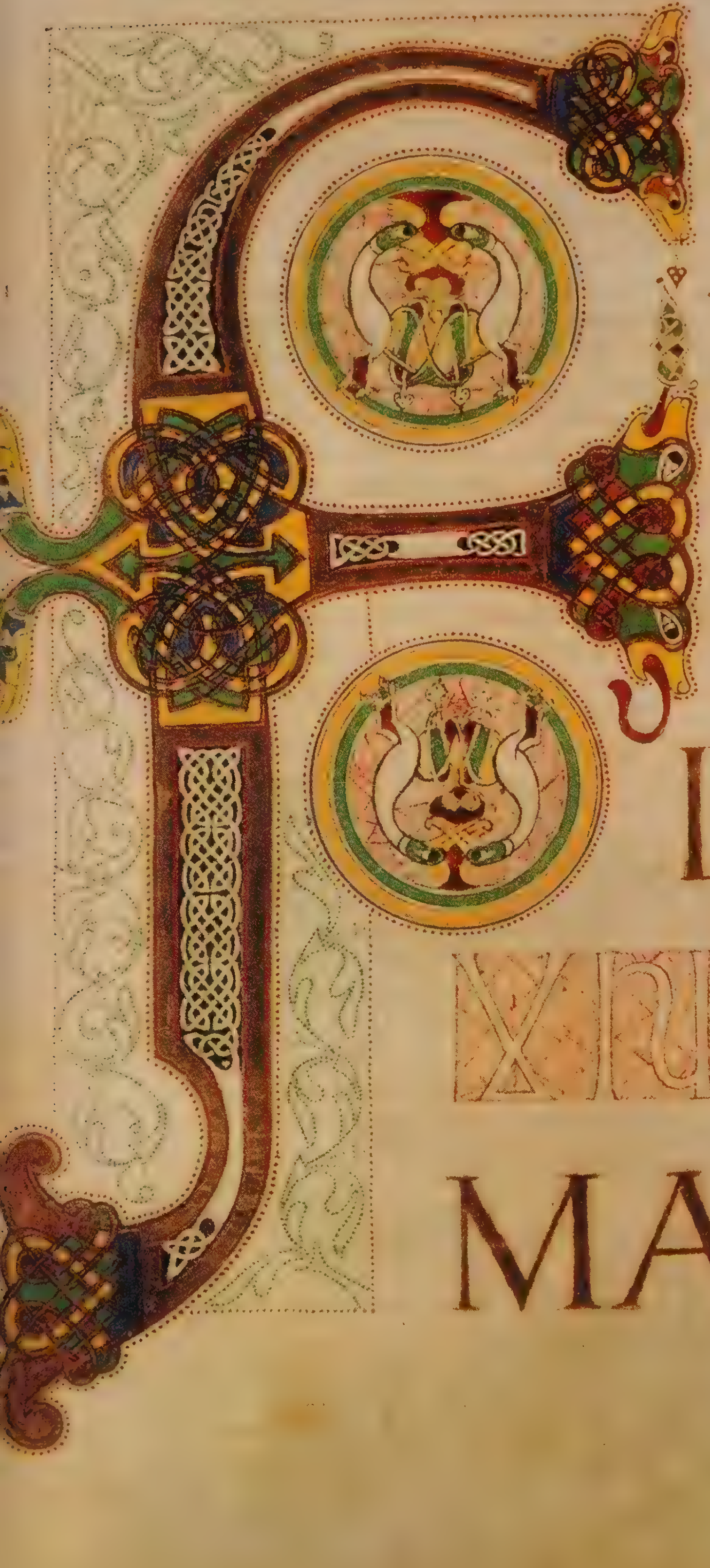
TEXT CONTINUED FROM PAGE 22

himself must pay due regard. "It is my duty," Charlemagne reminded Pope Leo III—he who was later to crown the emperor—"with the help of divine piety, to defend the Holy Church of Christ with arms on the outside against the raids of pagans and the ravages of the unfaithful, and within to protect it by diffusion of the Catholic faith. It is your duty, very holy Father, lifting your hands towards God with Moses, to help the success of our arms with your prayers." In another letter the king indirectly but emphatically admonished the pope "to live honestly and to give special attention to observing the holy canons," and in all ways to run an incorruptible, exemplary office. Charlemagne presided over his kingdom of God on earth with all the theocratic powers of the ancient Hebrew kings; indeed, among his intimates he chose to be addressed as David.

To those looking for more recent parallels, he seemed the re-embodiment of Roman imperial authority. More than eight centuries had passed since Julius Caesar had conquered Gaul, and more than three centuries had passed since the last Caesar of the West had given over to the remote Eastern emperor at Constantinople the do-

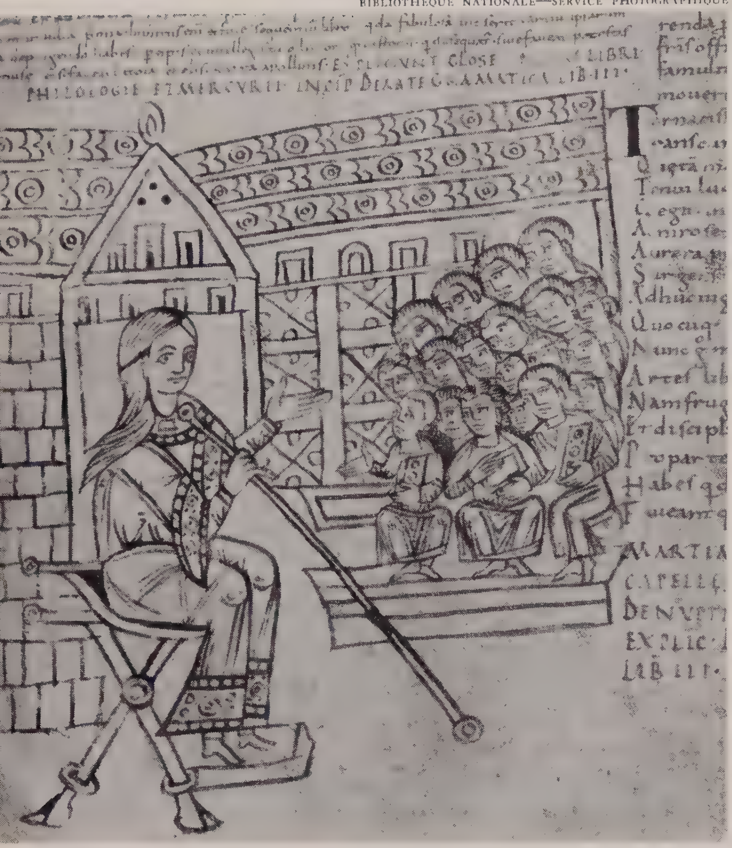
Reproduced above are two ornamented pages from one of the oldest and most famous of Carolingian manuscripts, a gospel prepared between 781 and 783 by one Godescalc for Charlemagne himself, in honor of the baptism of his son. Both pages are of purple-dyed parchment; the one at the left is inscribed in gold uncials with silver titles, the one at right in Carolingian minuscule—the oldest surviving example of this more advanced form of script which influenced manuscript writing for centuries and eventually affected Renaissance type forms and the printed letter forms of our own day. On a page from another Bible (opposite), made almost a century later for Charles the Bald, grandson of Charlemagne, the elaborate initials, combined with capital letters derived from monumental Roman inscriptions, reveal the influence of Irish and Anglo-Saxon traditions.

INCP̄TREGV̄
LIBERPRIM̄

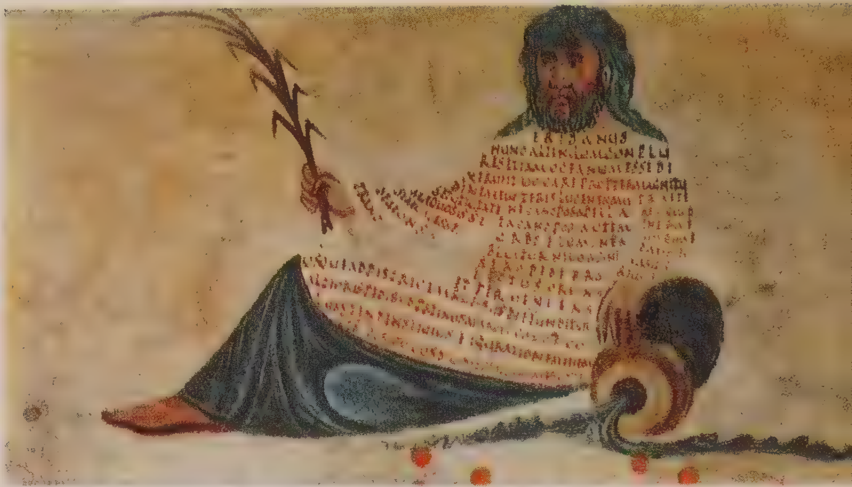


FVITVIR
VNVSDERA
MATHAIM

BIBLIOTHEQUE NATIONALE—SERVICE PHOTOGRAPHIQUE



A detail (left) from a tenth-century manuscript, The Nuptials of Mercury and Philology, *shows Grammar, the first of the seven liberal arts, instructing her pupils. This educational treatise was originally compiled by Martianus Capella, a Roman writer of the late Empire, who presented his material in allegorical and mythological stories. These became widely popular in Carolingian times. The seven liberal arts were then codified as the trivium (grammar, rhetoric, and logic), and the quadrivium (arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy), and as such constituted the basic framework of medieval education. Another detail (directly opposite) pictures the characters from a Carolingian copy of* Eunuchus, *a play by Terence. The drawings are probably based on some Roman model of the fourth or fifth century.*



BY PERMISSION OF THE TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM

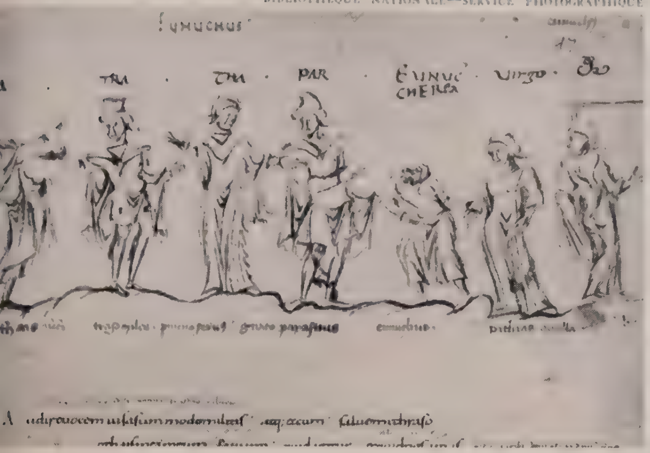
minion of the European Roman world. But the conviction that the Roman Empire of Caesar and Augustus had never ceased to exist faded very slowly. That empire, as one historian has observed, seemed to be "a necessary mode of being of the world, above the accidents of historical facts." For all its despotism, it had established peace and order, to which men's minds turned with stubborn nostalgia throughout the long, convulsive period of the barbarian invasions. And, in spite of the violence and cruelty with which Charlemagne imposed his sway over Europe, men were beginning to sense again the blessings of the Pax Romana.

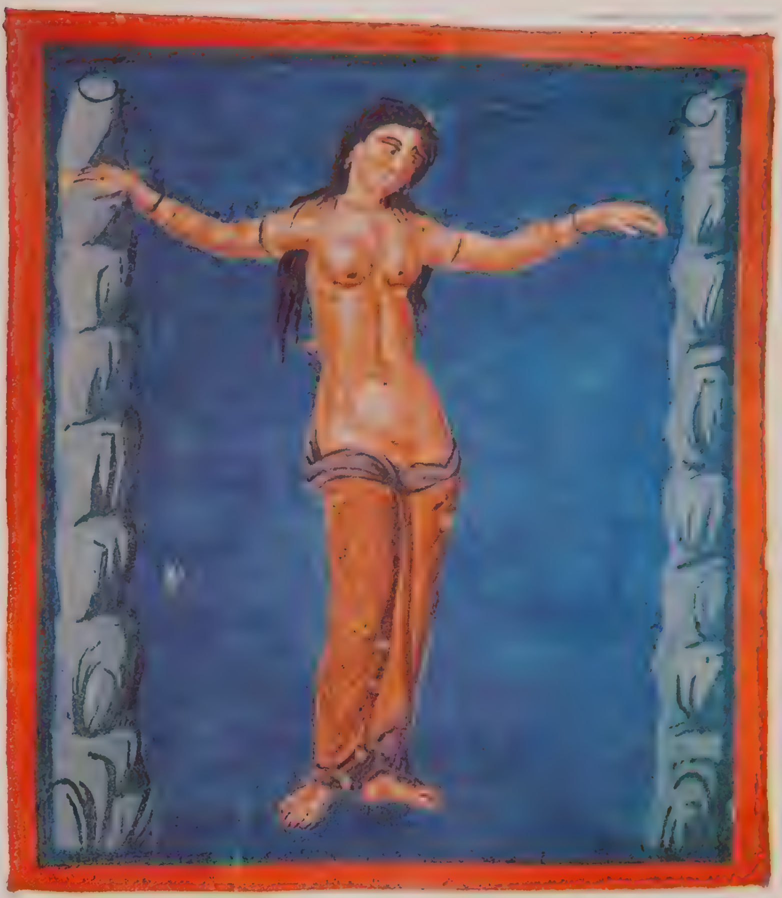
In 799 violence broke out in Rome, and Pope Leo was assaulted on the city's streets. The pope had already sent Charlemagne the keys to the grave of Saint Peter and the standard of the Eternal City, and had pledged his loyalty and obedience to his Frankish protector. Now he fled north to beseech the king for his aid. Charlemagne crossed the Alps again, restored order in Rome, and re-established the papal authority and dignity. It was during this interval, in 800, while Christmas Day Mass was being celebrated, that the grateful pope crowned Charlemagne with the diadem of the Caesars. He had become, as the crowds acclaimed him, "Charles Augustus, crowned by God, the great and peace-giving Emperor of the Romans." Whether this ceremony was planned in advance, and with Charlemagne's approval, may never be known. In the light of the future that did not matter. The crown fit securely and becomingly where it was placed, and in time, even the emperors of the East acknowledged as much.

Charlemagne did not revive the Roman Empire, except in name. At his coronation as emperor he wore the Roman long tunic and cloak, but it is significant that he never thus dressed again—and that he never returned to Rome after this epochal visit. In spite of his consuming interest in the revival, preservation, and dissemination of classical culture, which gave his reign the character of an early medieval renaissance, Charlemagne remained always a Frank. He chose as a new and permanent capital the old watering town of Aachen, between the Rhine and the Meuse, an area with which his Carolingian forebears had long been associated. And here he built a splendid palace with a church that seemed to his contemporaries a structure "half human, half divine"; and at Aachen he gathered about him wise and capable men to instruct him and to guide him in his role as a Christian monarch.

For untold centuries past the Mediterranean had been

BIBLIOTHEQUE NATIONALE—SERVICE PHOTOGRAPHIQUE





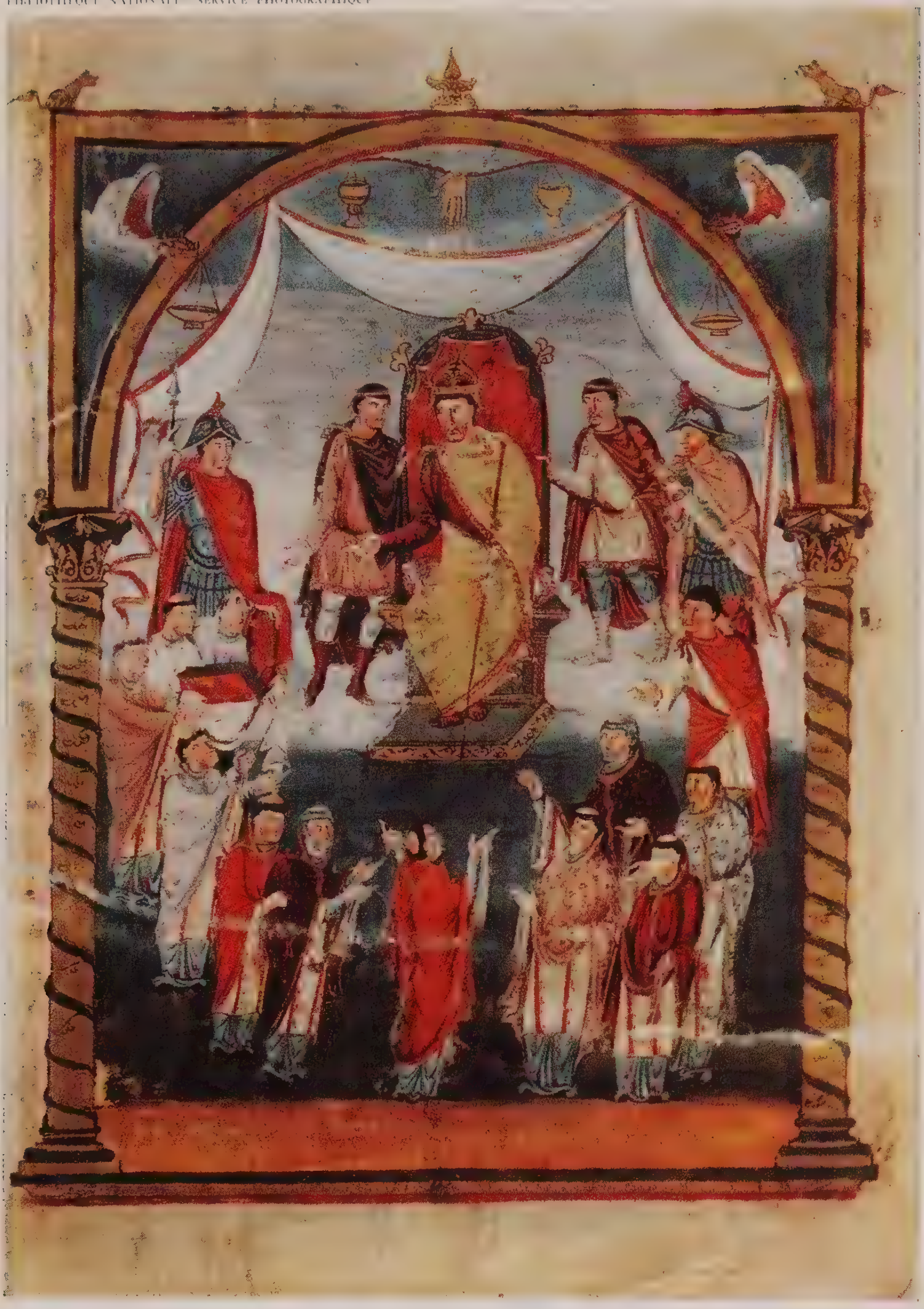
The constellations Andromeda (right) and Eridanus (opposite) are represented in two mid-ninth-century astronomy texts. Both manuscripts stem from a didactic poem composed by Aratus, a Greek, in the third century B.C. *and continuously rewritten until the Middle Ages. The figure of Andromeda recalls Pompeian paintings. The body of Eridanus, a water god, is composed of a rhymed version of Aratus by Cicero, which is here copied in rustic Roman capital letters.*

the maternal, nourishing element of all intellectual vigor and of all creative spirit. Urban life at Athens, Alexandria, Rome, and Constantinople had fed the growth of all civilizing tendencies and developments from time out of mind. Now the center of cultural ferment, in Europe at least, had shifted to the heartland of the rural dominions of the Franks—to a land that a few centuries earlier had been identified with long northern nights, dark forests, and crude barbarism. But out of this north were generated those influences that strongly conditioned the growth of a new European society.

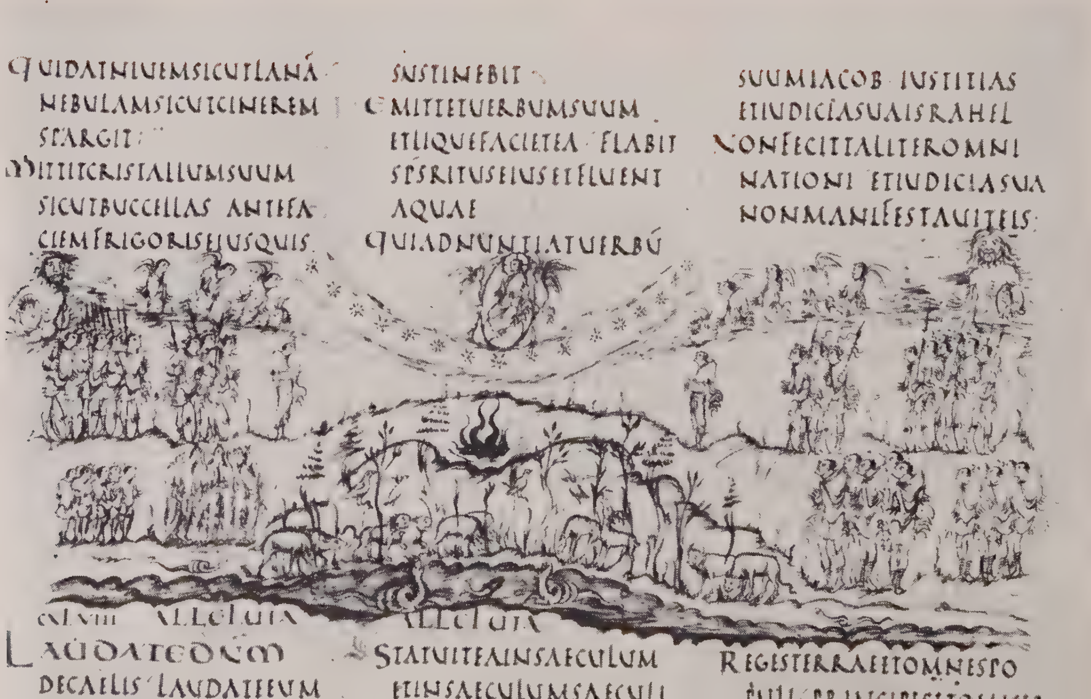
The administration of Charlemagne's huge and miscellaneous empire was a highly personal operation. Through his inheritance and by his conquests, peoples of many varied tribal traditions—Lombards, Burgundians, Franks, Saxons, and Bavarians, among others, not to mention Romans—had been brought within the imperial jurisdiction. He did not attempt to abolish their customary laws; but he apparently had these committed to writing, and then proceeded to refine them and add to them a voluminous flow of capitularies, or ordinances, of his own, which were final, absolute, and beyond appeal. To be sure that these promulgations were known, respected, and observed throughout the land, Charlemagne dispatched pairs of royal emissaries called *missi dominici*—usually consisting of one secular representative, a count, and one cleric, a bishop or an abbot, who were responsible directly to the emperor. They checked periodically in the most intimate detail on the behavior of his subjects, from the efficiency of high public officials to the sex habits of the lowliest monks. Although, as one of his capitularies stated, "the emperor cannot exercise the needful care and discipline upon each individual," through his *missi* Charlemagne did try to be everywhere at once in his realm. The welfare of his subjects rested almost completely in his own two hands. He was in effect, a contemporary phrase stated, "Lord and Father, King and Priest, the Leader and Guide of all Christians." And it may be fairly said that no one with such great power has abused it less.

Nothing better illustrates Charlemagne's vision of his "universal" state and of his own responsibility, under God, for its welfare than his determination to raise the educational standards of his people and to restore for their benefit the neglected knowledge of the past. The seed of such a revival had already been planted in an abysmally illiterate society by Boniface and his fellow missionaries a generation or two earlier. Now, forced by

BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE · SERVICE PHOTOGRAPHIQUE



In the miniature at left, Charles the Bald is seated on his throne, flanked by court personages and figures in "Roman" armor—a classical note also apparent in the architectural details. In the center foreground Count Vivian, lay abbot of St. Martin of Tours and Marmoutier, attended by members of his abbey, is about to present to Charles an illuminated Bible, on the last page of which this painting appears. The presentation was made in 851, and this is the earliest illustration of a contemporary event by an eyewitness in the history of Western painting. The hand of God appears at the top, dispensing divine authority to the ruler. Below, a detail from the so-called Utrecht Psalter illustrates Psalm 148, in which all living creatures give praise to the Lord. In this manuscript every metaphor and figure of speech is accompanied by a running pictorial translation. These pen drawings, vibrant with nervous energy, represent one of the greatest artistic achievements of the Carolingian age. They influenced other arts of the time and, later on, manuscript illustration in England.



QUIDATNIUEMSICUTLANĀ
NEBULAMSICUTCINEREM
SPARGIT
MITTITCRISTALLUMSUUM
SICUTBUCCELLAS ANTEFA
CIEMFRIGORISEIUSQUIS

SUSTINEBIT
EMITTETUERBUMSUUM
ETLIQUEFACIETEA FLABIT
SPSRITUSEIUSETFLUENT
AQUAE
QUIADNUNTIATUERBŪ

SUUMIACOB IUSTITIAS
ETIUDICIASUAISRAHEL
NONFECITTALITEROMNI
NATIONI ETIUDICIASUA
NONMANIFESTAUITEIS

CXLVIII ALLELUIA
LAUDATEDNM
DECAELIS LAUDATEEUM

ALLELUIA
STATUITEAINSAECULUM
ETINSAECULUMSAECULI

REGESTERRAEETOMNESPO

the enthusiasm of the king, it came to flower during his lifetime. There was no more eager student in the realm than Charlemagne himself. His interest in his own self-improvement appeared at times almost pathetic. For the age, Charlemagne had a well-informed if not brilliant mind; but he never mastered the art of writing, although we are told he "used to carry with him and keep under the pillow of his couch tablets and writing sheets that he might in his spare moments accustom himself to the formation of letters." To satisfy and exercise his own intellectual curiosity as well as to further his reforms, he gathered about him the brightest and most competent minds of the time. The old palace school of earlier kings was transformed into an academy of distinguished theologians and scholars who were enlisted from all parts of the realm and beyond. Alcuin, the most prominent of them all, was an Anglo-Saxon; Paul the Deacon, Paulinus of Aquileia, and Peter of Pisa came from Italy; Clement and Dungal were Irish; Theodulf and Agobard were Visigoths from Spain; and Einhard and Angilbert were Germans—that is, Franks.

The intellectual excitement that Charlemagne instigated by this recruitment of learned men, which was centered in the palace school, was to spread throughout his empire, largely by way of the monastic and episcopal centers of the land. Indeed, in an agrarian world the great Carolingian abbeys such as Tours, St. Gall, Reichenau, Fulda, Lorsch, Corbie, and others became the creative sources of civilization, as cities had been and were to be in both earlier and later societies. They were the basic social and economic centers of the age, and within their precincts were developed those traditions of art and letters, of architecture and liturgy, of music and calligraphy, which were to remain the essential cultural endowment of the centuries to come. They long survived the emperor's death and the political chaos that followed. Indeed, in later years King Alfred sent to the Franks for scholars who could help in the re-education of England. It can be claimed that in providing for the needs of his rude Christian society, Charlemagne laid the foundation of all modern education.

As one single token of this lasting influence, the page you are reading is printed in letters derived from the calligraphy developed in Carolingian manuscripts, called the Carolingian minuscule, a style of writing that became standard in most of western Europe. More than 90 per cent of the oldest surviving classical Latin texts have come down to us in the form of copies made in the Carolingian period, or in copies of them. For a long time these were mistakenly considered to be Roman manuscripts, and the characters themselves still are called "roman" letters.

In arts and architecture as in letters Charlemagne hoped to enrich and invigorate his northern world by a return to the forms and traditions of the earlier Roman Empire. Thus the design of his palace chapel at Aachen, which provided a model for many other Carolingian churches, was based on the church of San Vitale at Ravenna. To complete this structure he purloined classical columns, bronze gratings, and other ancient elements from Italy. This "marvel of workmanship," as Einhard described it, was the crowning ornament of the emperor's capital. In the end it was no imitation of any older model, but a vigorous northern interpretation that served to stimulate the development of new architectural styles and concepts; and in this creative fusion it is typical of Carolingian art.

The murals, mosaics, and sculptured reliefs that adorned such Carolingian structures have, along with the buildings themselves, almost entirely disappeared. It is in the so-called minor arts—ivories, metalwork, and particularly, brilliantly illuminated manuscripts—that the spirit of the age is most expressively revealed to us. The most characteristic—and the most significant—feature of Carolingian illumination is its tendency to return to the classical tradition, particularly in its renewed interest in the representation of the human figure. Some such illustrations in eighth- and ninth-century manuscripts are startlingly reminiscent of classical likenesses painted on the walls of Pompeii and elsewhere eight centuries earlier—illustrations no doubt based on long-lost late Roman and Byzantine models. Yet neither the Roman occupation of earlier centuries nor the classical revival of Charlemagne's time destroyed the rich cultural traditions of the Celtic, Germanic, and other "barbarian" people who had migrated to the western European continent. For barbarism is not savagery but rather a degree or stage of social organization; it is a tribal culture rather than one of a settled, authoritarian state. These people brought with them a heritage in their arts as in their folkways that was deeply rooted in a distant past, and in part inherited from the Scythians, Sarmatians, and other eastern tribes with whom they had come in contact during their earlier migrations. In a number of Carolingian manuscripts magnificent ornamental initials reflect that love of intricately patterned flat decoration typical of the art of the migration period—an old art that had been remembered by Irish and Anglo-Saxon illuminators and returned in refined forms to the Continent by missionaries from the British Isles. In others the pictures are almost set in motion by a dynamic expression of energy, a vibrant rhythmic quality that recalls the linear tensions of Celtic ornamentation (and also heralds the expressionism of much later German Gothic art). In what are perhaps the most remarkable of these, the pen drawings on the pages of the Utrecht Psalter (see opposite), the static monumentality of classical or Byzantine models has been completely transformed into a calligraphic impression of spirited human action that provides a continuous pictorial commentary on the accompanying text.

Charlemagne recalled from threatened obscurity the ancient traditions of art, as he had salvaged from possible destruction classical manuscripts of enduring importance. The "renaissance" he had fostered gained momentum, attaining an even more complete development in the generation following his death in 814. Some of the finest of such manuscript illuminations as we have mentioned were created during the reign of his grandson, Charles the Bald. But in his efforts to revive the ideals of classical antiquity, as is so often the case in such "revivals," Charlemagne merely performed the last rites over the past; and, as is also often the case, he signaled the advent of something new and different. As one French critic has observed, "*A lui finit la dissolution de l'ancien monde, à lui commence l'édification du monde moderne.*"

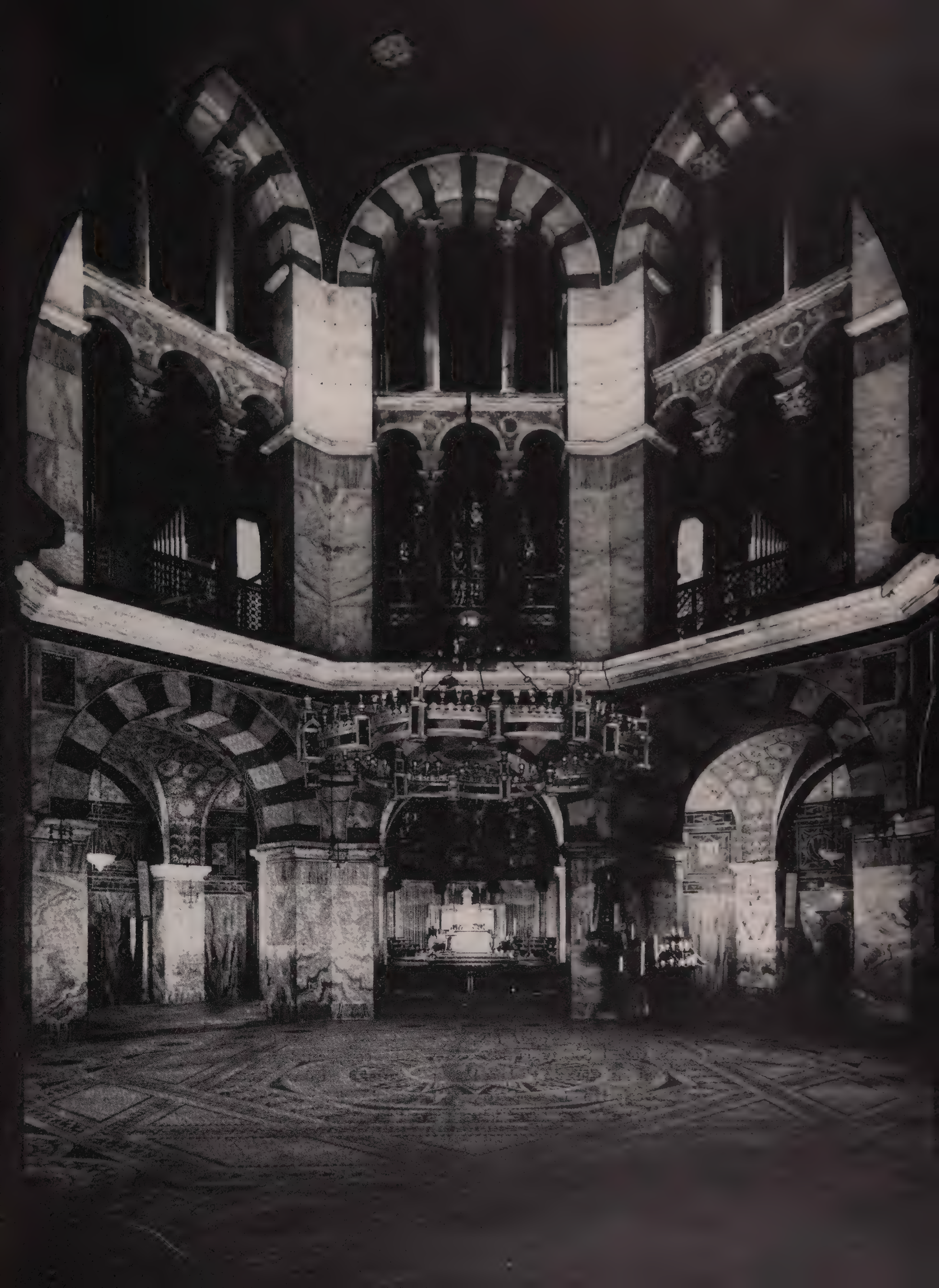
In the arts as in the rest of the cultural pattern that evolved in Carolingian times, the many conflicts between the traditions of the northern tribesmen and the inheritance of classical civilization were slowly resolved. The antique conception of the human figure, presented as an illusion of corporeal reality, and the barbarian preference for vigorous, flat patterns, ultimately merged into a fresh idiom. The human figures and other subjects are not realistically defined but are transformed into symbols used to animate the walls of a building or the pages of a book. By the end of the ninth century these new principles had been decisively formulated, and from them stemmed inevitably the glories of the Romanesque art that followed.

By an old, established, and highly misleading convention the term Middle Ages has been applied to that long period between the fall of Rome and the beginning of the Renaissance, as though the medieval world was simply a way station between antiquity and modern times. By an even more unfortunate convention this millennium has been broadly labeled the Dark Ages—implying a time of intellectual and cultural stagnation. Actually it was a period of assimilation, of ferment, and of consolidation. There were indeed years of relative "darkness"; but there were also interludes of radiant accomplishment. None of these had greater import for the future of Western civilization than the age of Charlemagne.

Régine Pernoud is Curator of the Archives Nationales in Paris and the author of numerous books dealing with medieval history. Her latest work, a biography of Eleanor of Aquitaine, was published in France last year.

For further reading: The Age of Charlemagne *by Donald Bullough (Putnam, 1966);* Charlemagne: Oeuvre, Rayonnement et Survivances *(the Conseil d'Europe, Aix-la-Chapelle, 1965);* The Era of Charlemagne *by Stewart C. Easton and Helene Wieruszowski (Van Nostrand, 1961);* Charlemagne *by Richard Winston (Vintage Books, 1954).*

The Palatine Chapel at Aachen (opposite), where Charlemagne is entombed, was consecrated by Pope Leo III in 805. It is the best preserved of Carolingian buildings. (The chandelier is a twelfth-century addition, the donation of Frederick Barbarossa). Because San Vitale at Ravenna had been the imperial chapel of the Western Roman emperors, Charlemagne chose that Italian structure as a model; old marble and bronze elements, brought from Ravenna, were incorporated in the Aachen chapel to link it more closely with the past. Actually, the building was an adaptation of its prototype, which led to new departures in architectural styles. Below is a seventh- or eighth-century ivory liturgical comb adorned by silver-gilt and precious stones.



A New Look at Audubon

His original bird paintings reveal an intimate record of the American Woodsman's remarkable achievement

By MARSHALL B. DAVIDSON

Since his death in 1851, John James Audubon—the self-styled "American Woodsman"—has been given the image of a folk hero whose stature seems to grow with time. His name has become virtually a household word, revered by Boy Scouts everywhere, adopted by conservationists as a rallying cry for their causes, and commonly misused by a wide public as a generic label for a miscellaneous variety of color prints of birds.

Audubon has also been acclaimed as one of the greatest nature artists in history, a judgment first made when he showed his work abroad in 1826 and one that has been repeated over the years to our own time. Although great advances have been made in ornithological studies during the past century, no single person, before or since, has contributed so much to the art of bird painting as Audubon did. The original paintings he created for the engraved illustrations in his monumental publication *The Birds of America* not only stand as a great landmark in the field of ornithology but they constitute, as a collection, one of the most precious documents in the annals of American art.

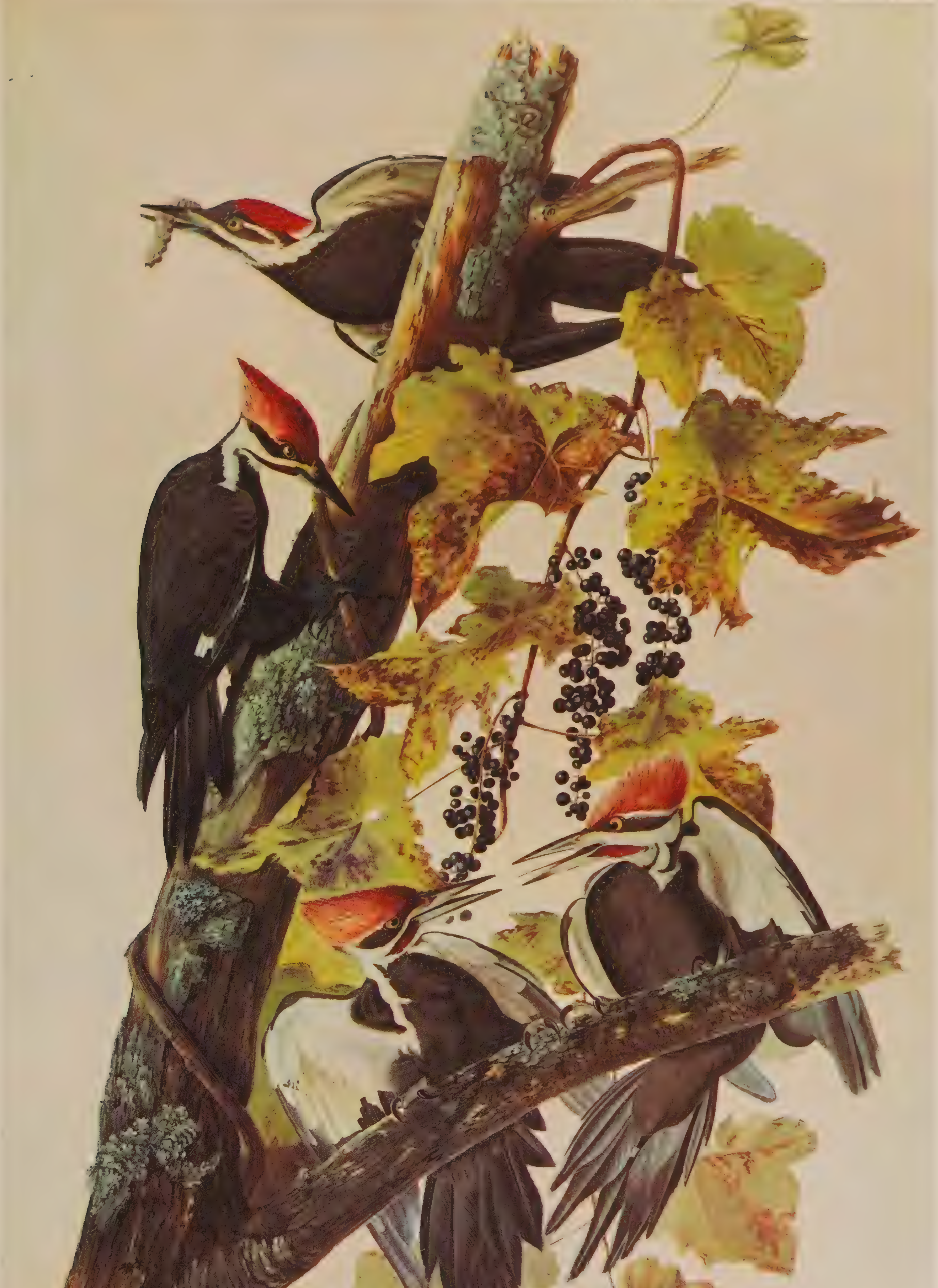
For more than a century virtually the complete series of these remarkable paintings has been carefully preserved at the New-York Historical Society in New York City. For numerous reasons, including the vital need to conserve their delicate water colors and fragile pastels, the collection of 430-odd subjects has rarely been publicly displayed in its entirety. Recently, in collaboration with the Society, the American Heritage Publishing Company has undertaken to prepare the first color reproductions of the complete series to be made with the accuracy of modern engraving and printing techniques. These unique reproductions will appear in a two-volume publication, *The Original Water-Color Paintings by John James Audubon for "The Birds of America,"* to be issued in a limited edition this June.

The subjects illustrated on the following eight pages have been selected from the book to indicate the range and flexibility of Audubon's art. Audubon was strictly a representational artist, intent on re-creating a convincing, detailed impression of the natural world as he intimately observed it. He had no fixed "style" as such. Rather he adapted his techniques, his mediums, and his compositions to the requirements of each individual case—to the point, indeed, where different paintings might often be considered as the works of diverse artists.

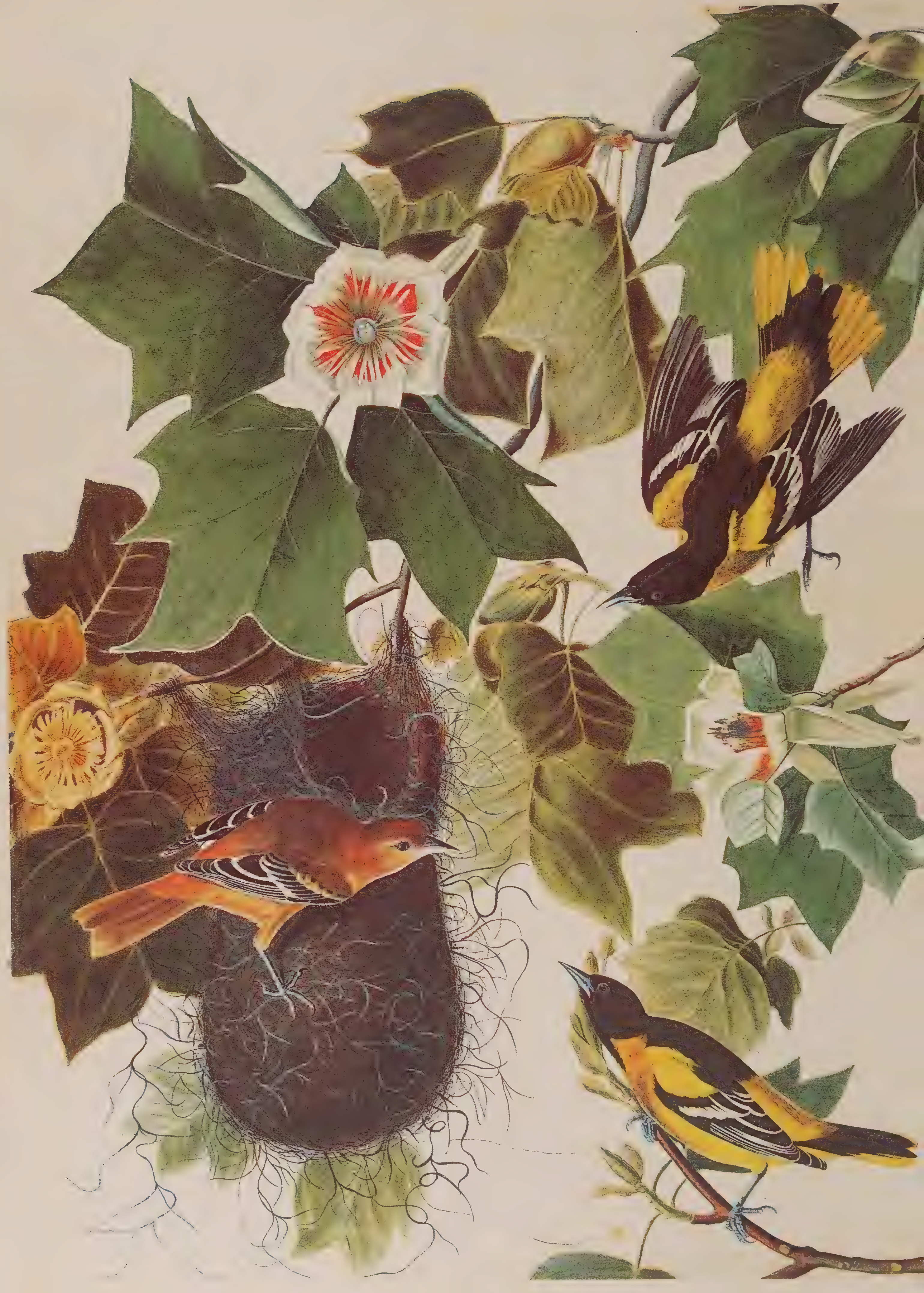
The stark, almost abstract design of an arctic tern shown high in the air against the swiftly suggested background of a northern sky (figure 3) radically contrasts with the intricate design and variegated coloring of Baltimore orioles near their nest in a tulip tree (figure 2) and with the complicated arrangement of bold forms in the painting of pileated woodpeckers perched on a dead tree festooned with fox grapes (figure 1). Again, the languid grace of a snowy egret posed among the reeds of a South Carolina plantation (figure 5) offers a tranquil counter-

TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 41

ILLUSTRATIONS [illegible] BY THE NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY [illegible]

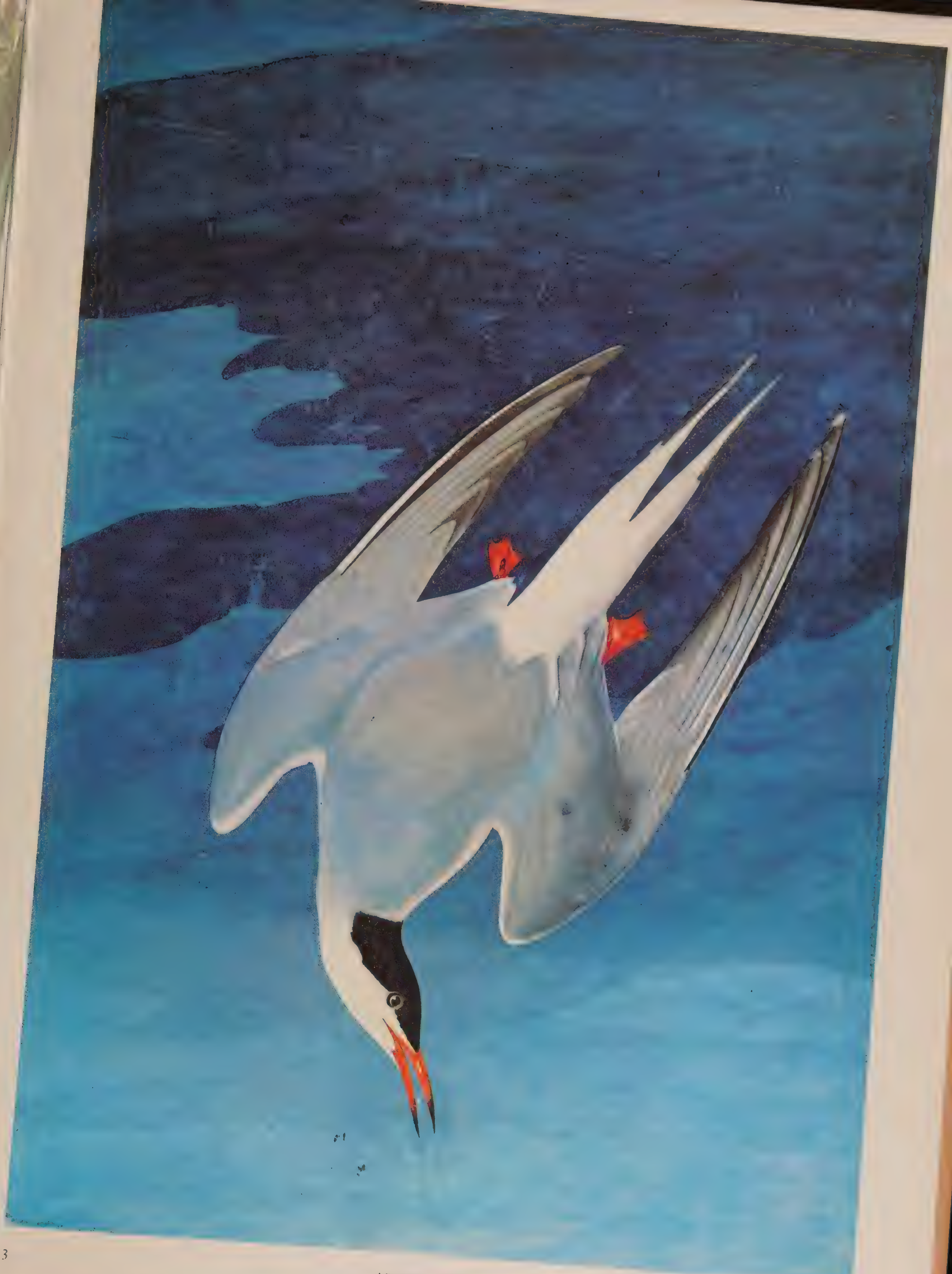

No. 21.
Plate 101.
Pileated Woodpecker
Vitis

PILEATED WOODPECKER

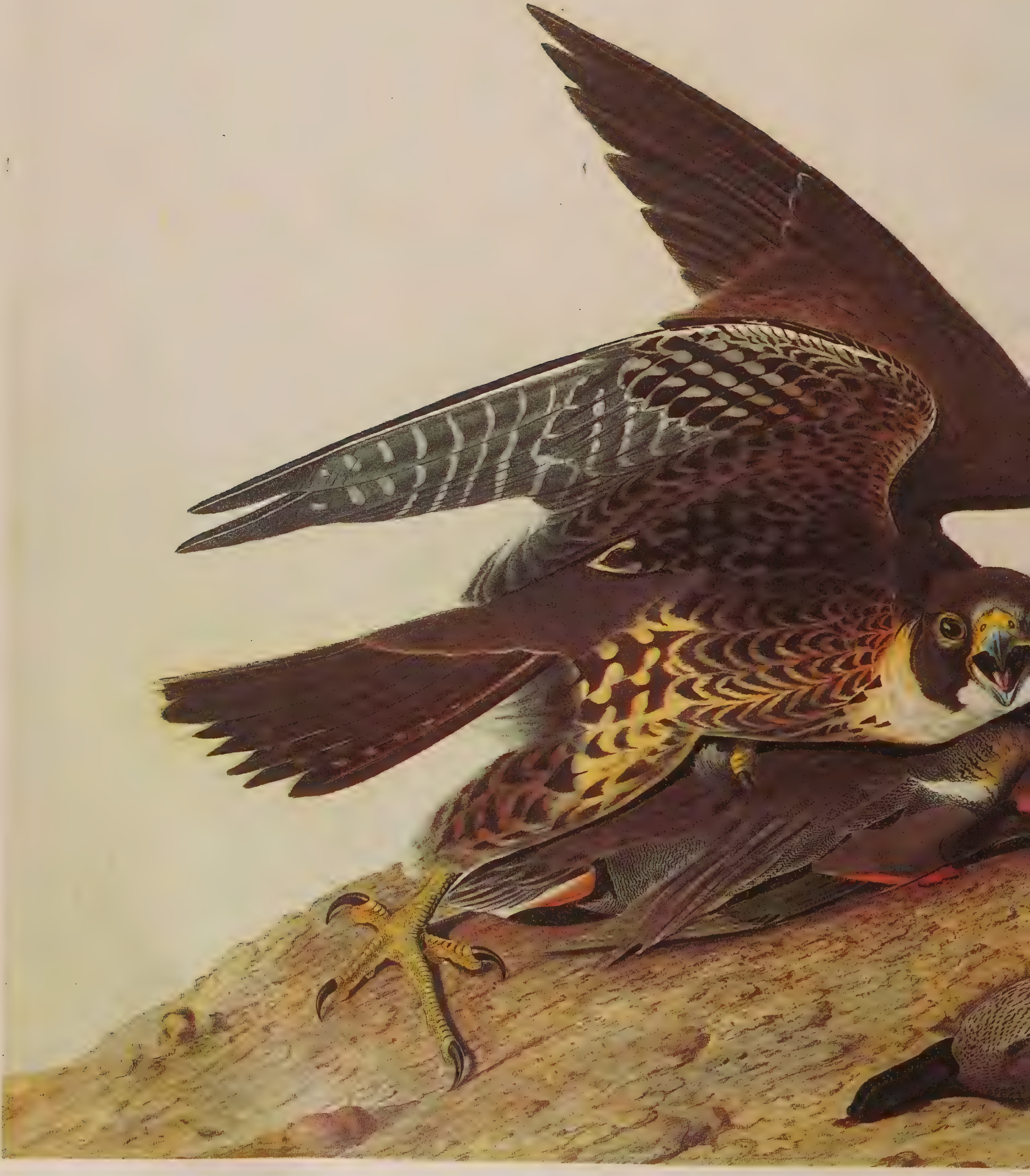


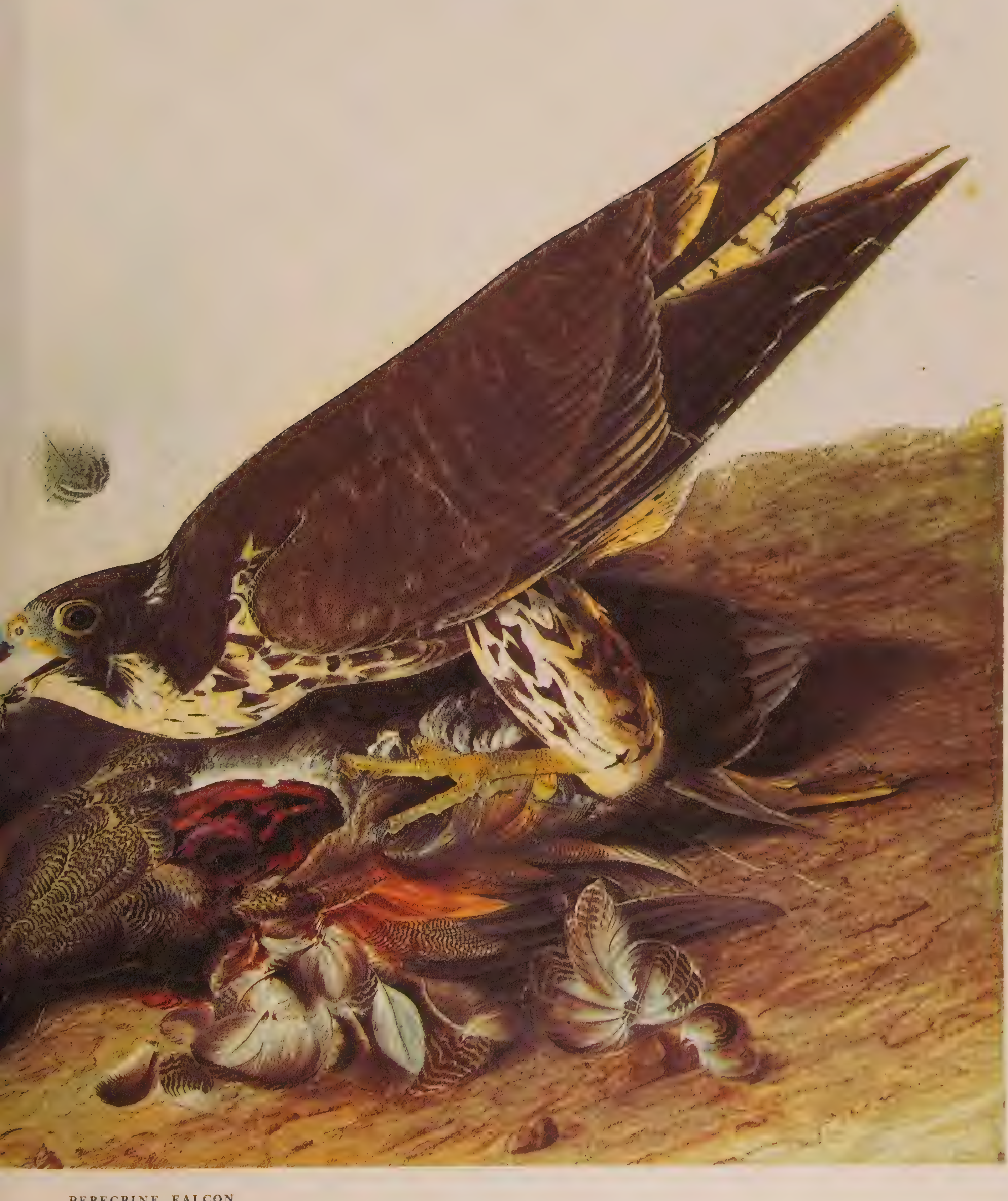
2

BALTIMORE ORIOLE

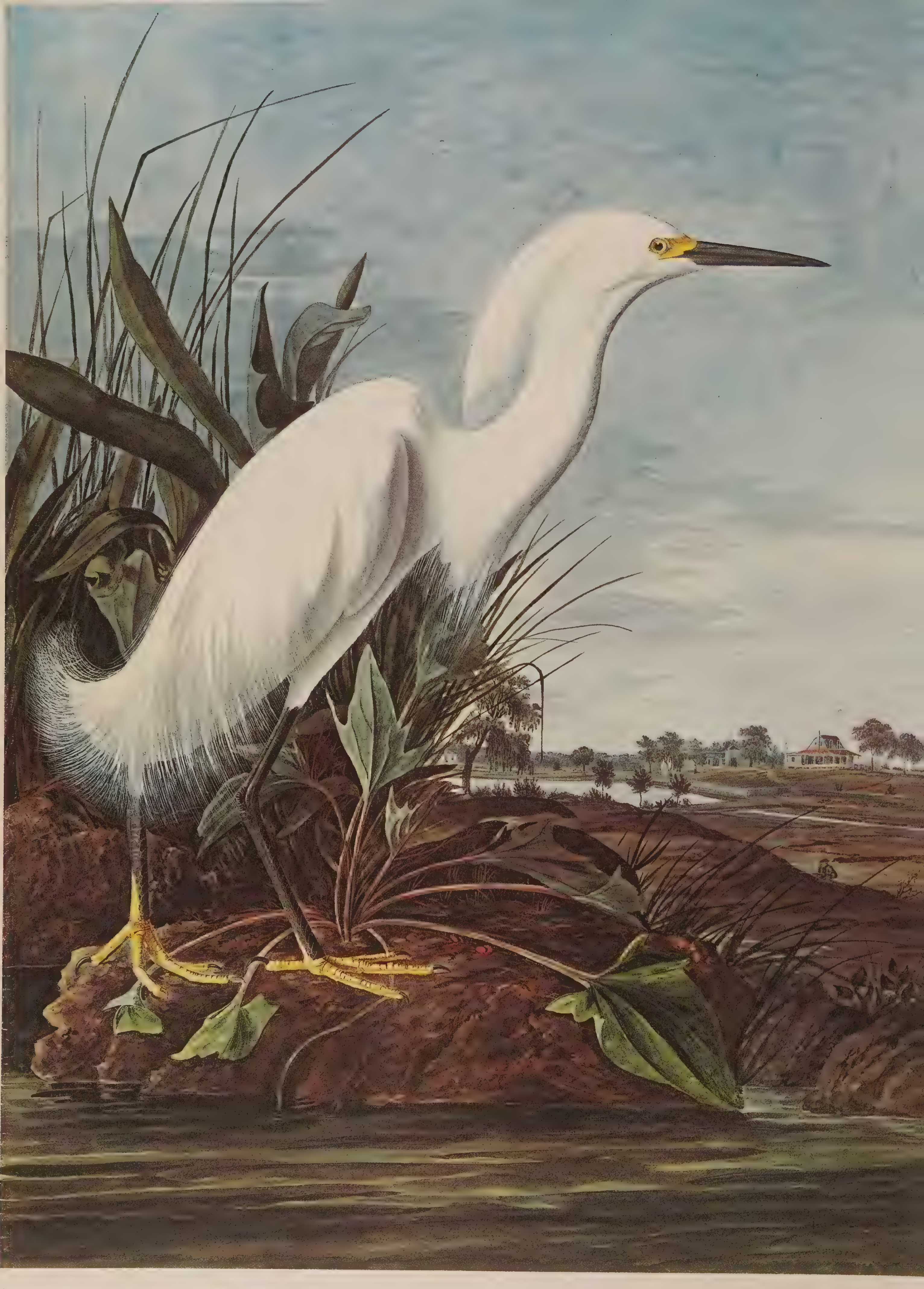


ARCTIC TERN

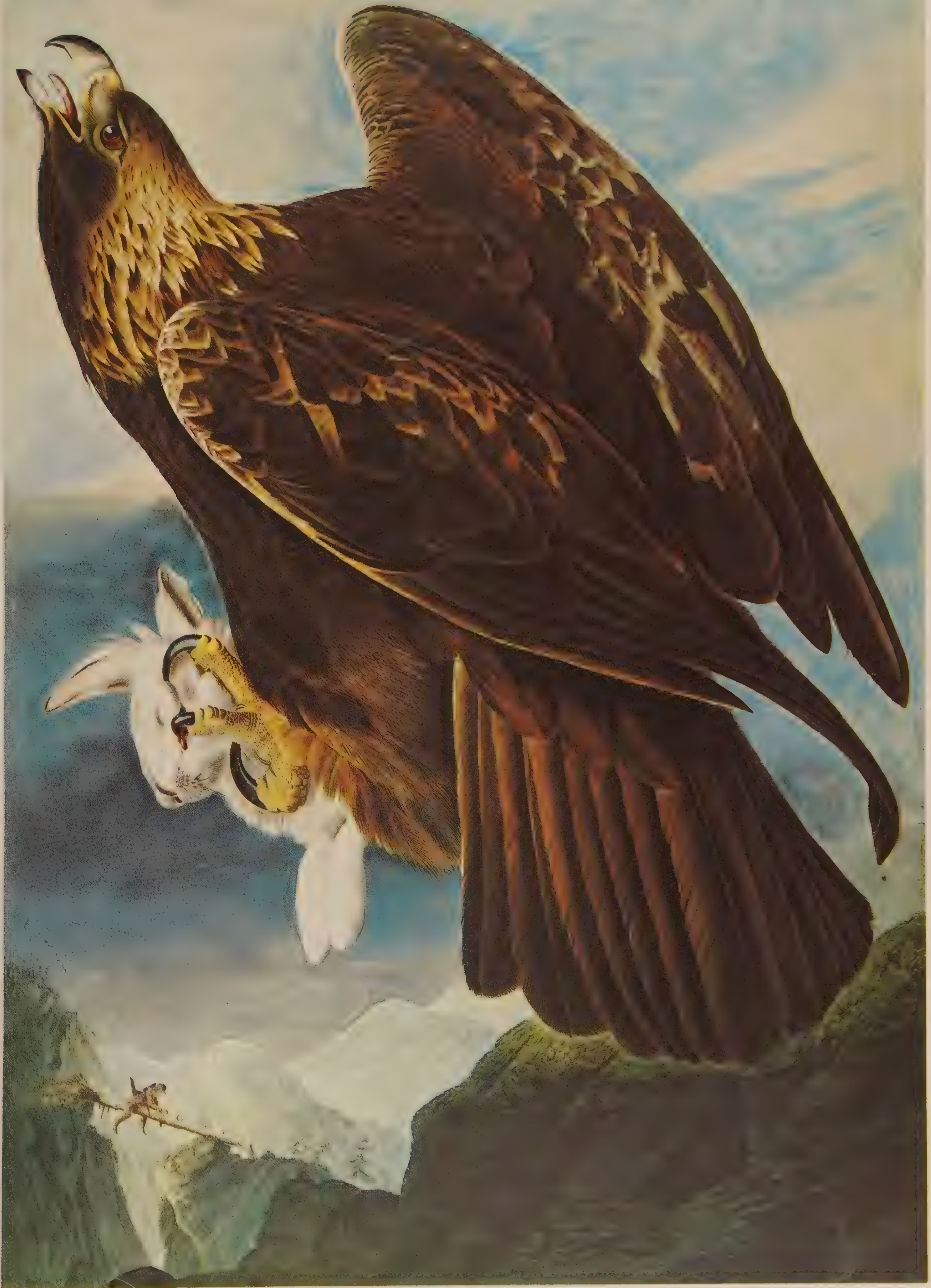




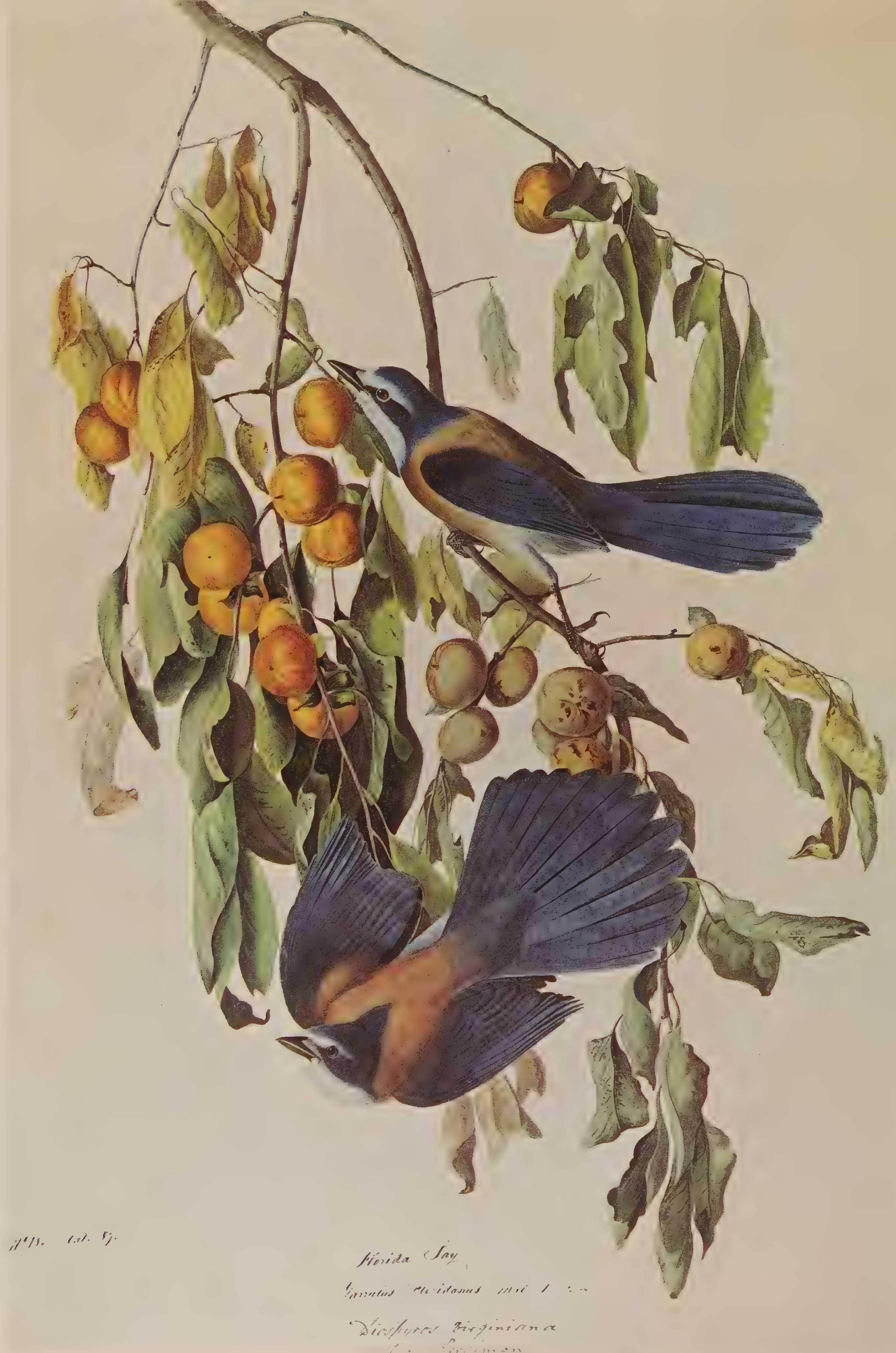
PEREGRINE FALCON



SNOWY EGRET



GOLDEN EAGLE


N°13. Pl. 87.
Florida Jay
Garrulus floridanus
Diospyros virginiana
Persimon

7 FLORIDA JAY

TEXT CONTINUED FROM PAGE 32

point to the predatory flight of a screaming golden eagle clutching a hapless northern hare in its talons (figure 6). (In the latter painting, Audubon pictured a hunter—possibly meant to represent himself—crossing a chasm on a fallen tree.) In his brilliant depiction of Florida jays with the branch of a persimmon tree (figure 7), as in the other subjects here illustrated, he created a highly decorative composition without distortion of the natural world he drew from.

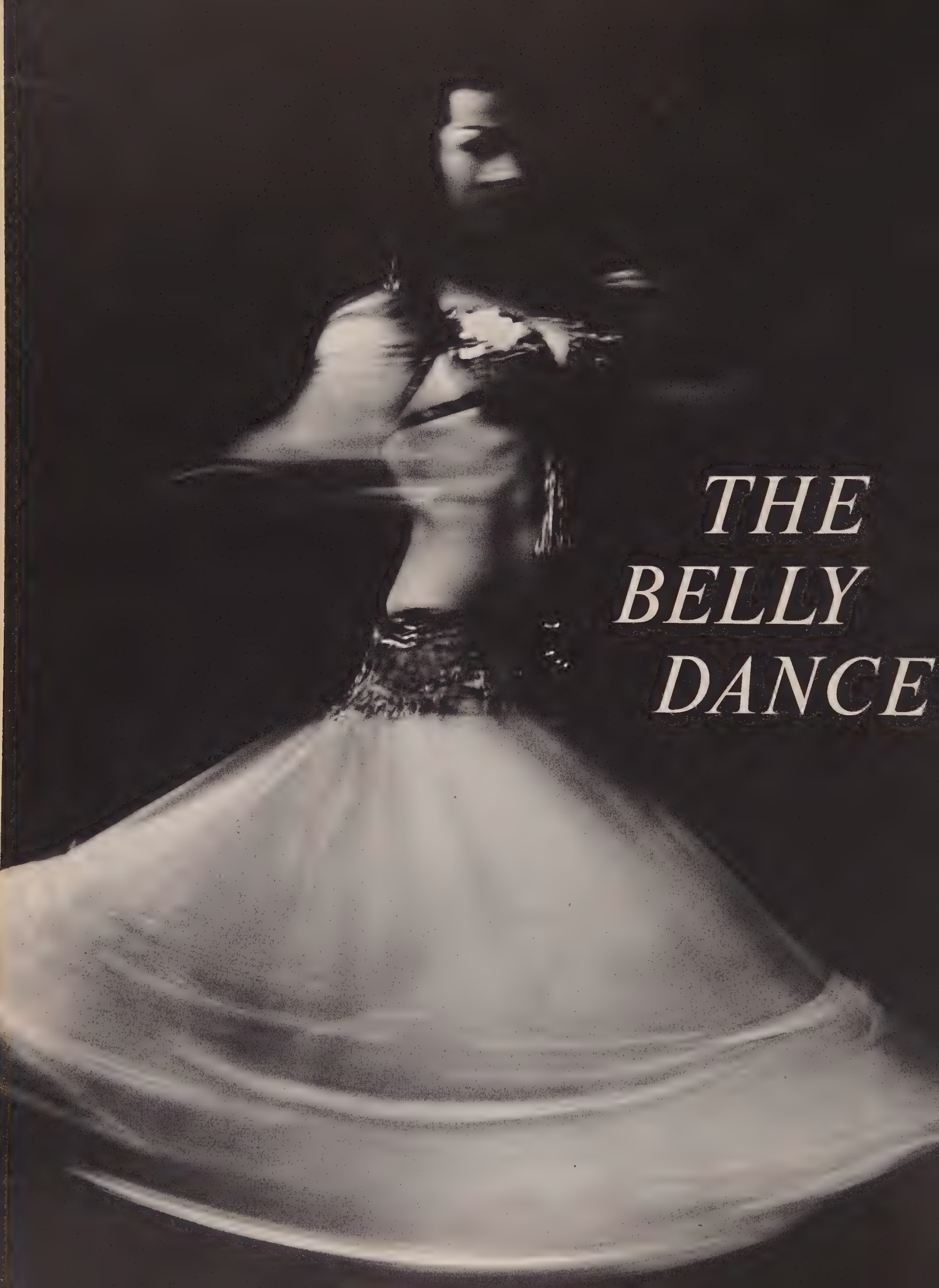
For any comparable combination of technical virtuosity, sophisticated design, and convincing naturalism in bird painting, we must turn to earlier works by Oriental artists. Of these, it is safe to assume, Audubon knew nothing; but he was keenly aware of the importance of his own accomplishment in producing his large gallery of bird portraits. He did know that no Occidental artist before him had painted bird life on such a heroic scale, or had recorded such animated, informed likenesses of birds in their different habitats. And he felt with growing conviction that no one who came after him would have the same opportunity to make such a report on the birds of America. The primeval haunts in which they flourished so abundantly and so variously were already vanishing in Audubon's day.

Also, he realized that to reach a wider audience than might ever see these paintings—and to gain some financial reward for his years of dedicated labor—he must publish for sale engraved copies of his work. This he did, first with a series of full-scale prints prepared for the most part by the English engraver Robert Havell, Jr., and then with other reproductions in smaller sizes produced in Philadelphia by means of lithography. Both were successful publications. Indeed, the larger Havell prints in particular are now rare and costly collectors' items. (Recently a complete set of these was sold for approximately $65,000.) They are commonly mislabeled Audubon "originals," which of course they are not in any strict sense of the term. Since then, reproductions of Audubon's birds have largely been copies of those copies, or copies of copies of such copies in almost endless proliferation, until the essential qualities of the man's art are altogether lost.

Returning to the original paintings brings us directly back to Audubon's highly personal method and approach—and to the most intimate aspects of his artistic labors. On several occasions he claimed that as a youth he had studied in Paris with Jacques Louis David, who was the virtual dictator of French art during the days of the Directory and Napoleon's empire; and there is little reason to doubt that he did. However, it remains true that over the years he developed his talent largely by his own constant and dogged determination to improve his performances. His earliest efforts were largely drawn in pencil and pastel, but in his mature work he combined these with water color, ink, oil, and even egg white—anything that would enable him better to simulate the sheen, textures, and colors of his feathered subjects. Each of his birds was drawn to actual size. It was his practice to wire freshly killed specimens in lifelike attitudes against a firm background ruled into squares and to draw off the likeness on similarly squared paper. This method gave a measure of control to his draftsmanship that could have resulted in mechanical and artificial constructions, but instead the finished results usually give an illusion of spontaneity in the re-creation of the living bird because Audubon's mind's eye brimmed with keen observations of the creatures in all their winged freedom. No other artist of his time was so sensitively and passionately concerned with these aspects of the American scene.

A number of the paintings carried detailed instructions for Havell, to guide the engraver and his colorists in the preparation of the copies, notations which were naturally suppressed in the making of the engraved plates. Occasionally the asides were self-critical, as when he inscribed on one painting: "The outer primary of the male bird is pure white, it is dirty in the drawing because the White colour I used happened to be *bad*." In the end Audubon was his own most tireless critic; the precise coloration, the sensitive characterizations, and the subtle compositions he achieved in his finished paintings were the result of repeated trials, frequent correction, and at times, ingenious contrivance. For example, the female peregrine falcon at the right in figure 4, done largely in pastel, was cut out of an earlier drawing and pasted onto paper; the water-color painting of a male bird and a couple of slaughtered ducks was then added. Audubon worked almost incessantly for fourteen days before completing his rendering of the golden eagle to his satisfaction.

The fame of his paintings has tended to distract us from the volumes of text Audubon compiled to accompany Havell's engraved plates. Much of its ornithological data has been superseded by subsequent studies, but the accounts of his experiences in the living presence of the birds, and his lyrical commentaries on the American scene, provide a superb complement to his graphic art. Although Thoreau hated their dust and must, he visited the libraries of Boston and Cambridge to read Audubon "with a thrill of delight." In later years, the naturalist "John o' Birds" Burroughs found his life's direction when he first came upon these same books. In the forthcoming American Heritage publication excerpts from these writings have been used as commentaries to the reproductions. Their exact and colorful observation of nature at times surpasses anything in the history of American nature writing, and clearly reveals how Audubon's richly informed vision must have guided his brush and pencil in the years he labored over his gigantic task.

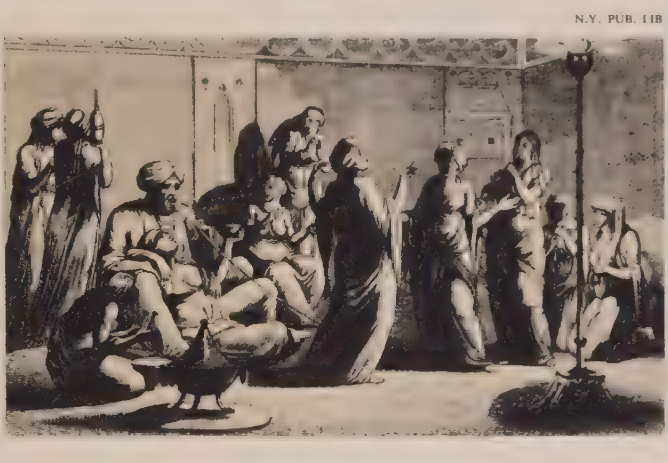


THE BELLY DANCE

For centuries the principal ingredients in the popular Western image of the Middle East have been spirituality and sex. As early as the sixteenth century, European writers were using the second half of this irresistible combination to describe and define a venerable Eastern art form, the belly dance; and the ignorance or laziness of countless popular writers and artists ever since has only reinforced the stereotype. Thus, when the belly dance made a tardy but spectacular debut on the American scene at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, it was in a carnival atmosphere that made it impossible to take it seriously. Nowadays it is more often called the Oriental dance, a label apparently designed to lend modesty by shifting the point of reference from anatomy to geography. Yet the sexual stereotype remains, and most of the belly dancers one can see in America do little to shake it off. The "Oriental dancers" who suddenly became popular in New York five or six years ago are more in the tradition of American burlesque than of anything else. And it was no doubt this sort of thing that Representative H. R. Gross, Republican of Iowa, had in mind last September when he sought to defeat the bill to aid the arts by offering an amendment to include the belly dance. As the Congressman jocularly put it, he saw no reason to exclude from federal assistance "the irregular jactitations and/or rhythmic contraction and co-ordinated relaxations of the serrati, obliques, and abdominis recti group of muscles—accompanied by rotatory undulations, tilts, and turns timed with and attuned to the titillating and blended tones of synchronous woodwinds."

It is an ancient and honorable art enjoyed at home, as shown at right, or in public by an audience of connoisseurs

N.Y. PUB. LIB



As the fame of the belly dance spread to the Western world, it became something of an embarrassment to the cultural and political custodians of the East, who began to consider themselves above their own popular arts. More than a century ago a ruler of Egypt banished all belly dancers from Cairo; the present regime, less extreme in this regard, contents itself with requiring them to cover themselves from neck to ankles. Although the growth of tourism has brought about a revival of belly dancing in Egypt, and Egyptian intellectuals have begun to discuss and analyze its significance, the quality and character of the dance itself are in a state of decline. This is because the government encourages instead the performance of a sort of folkloric dance that only vaguely resembles the belly dance; it offers no help to the real belly dance, perhaps in the hope that it will be confined to the tourist trade and benighted masses.

The most artistic form of the belly dance, which emerged in the nineteenth century and reached a high point in our own times, called for movement across space as well as muscular virtuosity while standing in one place, and was performed by well-trained dancers. This dance, which has already been debased in the West by its assimilation to the strip tease, now is in danger of being "elevated" and modified into folklore by the solemn new regimes of the Middle East.

No one can say exactly how and where the belly dance originated. Nor does it matter. There are enough differing forms of this elemental dance to permit the assumption that it must have developed in several places a very long time ago. The dancers themselves always tell tourists and writers that their costumes, movements, and gestures are deliberately based on the dances of ancient Egypt. They may be right, but they are hardly experts, for, whatever their accomplishments, Egyptology is not one of them. They make these claims for the same reason that they minimize the sexual aspect of the dance: to give themselves what they consider greater respectability, as if their art alone were not enough to recommend them. Yet so great an Orientalist as Edward William Lane professed, in his classic *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, to have found similarities between the belly dance he witnessed in Cairo in the 1830's and the ancient dances represented in the tombs of the Pharaohs; he even thought that the dancers themselves might be descended from those of ancient Egypt.

The possible affinity between the belly dance and the Pharaonic dance is not a subject that many Egyptologists have seen fit to explore. There was, however, a Czech scholar who was so incensed by the suggestion of any link between the two that he set his daughter to studying all the illustrations in the tombs. In her book, published in 1935 by the Oriental Institute in Prague, she,

By MORROE BERGER

like her father, concluded that the modern belly dance came not from their beloved ancient Egyptians but from the Etruscans of Italy. Unfortunately for this thesis, the tomb paintings did reveal gestures and costumes similar to those of the belly dance. Something like the belly dance also reached Spain in early times, as we learn from the first-century Roman poets Juvenal and Martial. The former disapprovingly describes the dancing girls of Cadiz as "sinking down with quivering thighs to the floor," while the latter warns his guests not to expect to be entertained by these dancers who "with endless prurience swing lascivious loins in practiced writhings." The dance has also been attributed to the Gypsies, who, since they are not given to writing articles and books, have no means of refusing all the dubious honors heaped on them.

Whatever its origins, the belly dance in recent centuries has been thought of as Middle Eastern. There is good reason for this identification, because the dance has long been cultivated there. One thousand years ago the great Arab historian al-Mas'ūdī related this story in his account of the world since creation, which he called *Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems*: In the ninth century, just after the golden age of Baghdad, Caliph Mu'tamid asked a scholar what qualities made a dancer great. The scholar began with a brief statement about the eight kinds of rhythm. Then he described the temperament and physique a great dancer must have, mentioning one quality which indicates that he probably had something like the belly dance in mind. A great dancer, he told the Caliph, must have "loose joints and a great agility in twirling and in swaying her hips."

Despite all this, the cultural authorities of Egypt today are trying to disown the dance. The director of the folklore section of the Ministry of Culture told me that there is no trace of such a dance in ancient or Arab Egypt; it appears in Egypt only under the Turks (whom Arabs blame for most of the things that they dislike in themselves). He has even issued a memorandum on the subject which says that belly dancing "came to us during Turkish and Mamlūk rule and was performed by slaves. It was further degraded when it left the palaces and went into the streets." There is no doubt that the belly dance flourished in Turkey—and among Gypsies, too. Sulukule, the old Gypsy quarter of Istanbul, was famous for its dancers. But nothing can refute the well-attested fact that, however much the official guardians of culture in Cairo may regret it, the belly dance is justly identified with Egypt, and has been since the nineteenth century.

Today, there are three main variations of the belly dance. One is the folk dance of the masses in the villages and cities, in which the sexual element is definite but subdued. Another is the traditional dance of the professional entertainers and the teachers of amatory arts to the ladies of the harem; in this there is not much locomotion but considerable muscular movement, especially of the pelvis. Finally, there is what we might call the cabaret style; it is based on the second variation, but some locomotion and considerable grace have been added to it by dancers with serious training.

It has never been easy to describe any of these forms. A French savant who accompanied Napoleon on his Egyptian adventure in 1798 was so overwhelmed by the muscular dances he saw that he wrote: "It is impossible to describe this sort of dance with exactitude in our language." Fifty years later Gustave Flaubert, whose affair with a famous dancer in Egypt left an indelible mark on his spirit (and perhaps on his body, for a later medical analysis suggests he might have died of the effects of syphilis contracted in her company), attributed the inadequacy to himself rather than to the French language. After he had been favored with a private performance, he lamented in a letter to a friend: "I spare you any description of the dance—it wouldn't come off."

An American traveler of the time was not so reticent. He was George William Curtis, the scion of a respected New England family, a well-known orator, essayist, and earnest social reformer who had been at Brook Farm and knew Emerson and the transcendentalists. He visited the same dancer-courtesan with whom Flaubert had spent a night "such as one seldom experiences in a lifetime." She was Kutchuk Hanem, who had been banished from Cairo to Esna, five hundred miles up the Nile, when the ruler of Egypt discovered that she had sold his presents to second-

hand dealers in the bazaar. Curtis, then only in his twenties, had the courage to describe her dance in Horace Greeley's New York *Tribune*. "Kutchuk stood motionless . . ." he wrote. "The sharp surges of sound swept around the room, dashing in regular measure against her movelessness, until suddenly the whole surface of her frame quivered in measure with the music. Her hands were raised, clapping the castanets, and she slowly turned upon herself, her right leg the pivot, marvellously convulsing all the muscles of her body. When she had completed the circuit of the spot on which she stood, she advanced slowly, all the muscles jerking in time to the music, and in solid, substantial spasms. It was a curious and wonderful gymnastic. There was no graceful dancing—once only there was the movement of dancing when she advanced, throwing one leg before the other, as Gypsies dance. But the rest was most voluptuous motion . . ."

In one significant respect Curtis was more restrained than Flaubert. Far from abandoning himself to the entertainer, as Flaubert did, he exhibited a self-control that must have pleased his *Tribune* readers. "Farewell, Kutchuk!" he wrote. "Addio, still-eyed dove! Almost thou persuadest me to pleasure. O Wall Street, Wall Street! because you are virtuous, shall there be no more cakes and ale?"

The classical style of the belly dance is shown on these pages in photographs of a performance by Saliha, a well-known Turkish dancer now working in America. The famous Little Egypt (at right), who popularized the hootchy-kootchy at Coney Island around 1900, was less traditional in her approach. At far right is a dancer from the Chicago Fair of 1893.

MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF N.Y

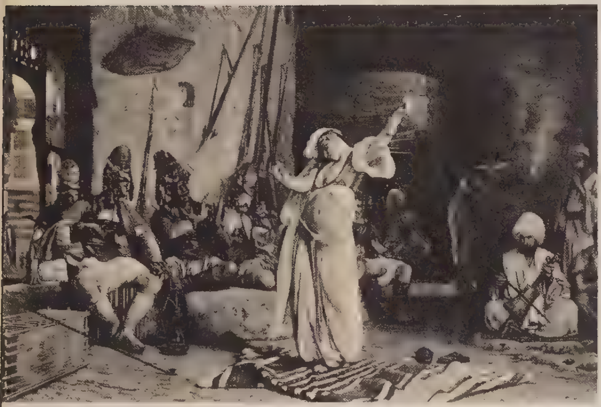
It was only a matter of time until some enterprising man would bring the belly dance to the West. It arrived at the Paris International Exposition of 1889 in the form of an "Algerian Village." A young American promoter of popular entertainment, Sol Bloom, saw it. "I doubt very much," he wrote in his autobiography six decades later, after a varied career that included a quarter-century in the House of Representatives and chairmanship of the powerful Committee on Foreign Affairs, "whether anything resembling it was ever seen in Algeria, but I was not at the time concerned with trifles." With all the judgment of his nineteen years, Bloom paid a thousand dollars for the exclusive right to present the "dancers, acrobats, glass-eaters and scorpion-swallowers" in America.

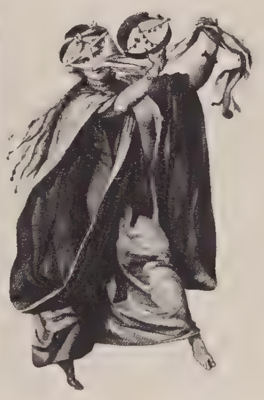
Where? After finding no enthusiasm to match his own, Bloom heard that an international exposition was planned for Chicago and that a Midway Plaisance was being built to house all the entertainment. Under the direction of the fair's Department of Ethnology, headed by a Harvard professor, things were going slowly. Then Bloom became manager of the concessions and the whole Midway was placed in less academic hands. In his new post he had no trouble bringing his Algerian village to the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893. "All I had to do," he said, "was approve it myself." Bloom's own favorites in the village were the belly dancers. "It is regrettable . . ." he pointed out in his autobiography, "that more people remember the reputation of the *danse du ventre* than the dance itself. . . . When the public learned that the literal translation was 'belly dance' they delightedly concluded that it must be salacious and immoral. The crowds poured in. I had a gold mine." Money did not, however, exclude art for Bloom. "As a matter of strict fact," he insisted, "the *danse du ventre*, while sensuous and exciting, was a masterpiece of rhythm and beauty; it was choreographic perfection . . ."

Two eminent Americans who took a special interest in the Chicago Fair were among those who had made a trip up the Nile and seen the belly dance in its own setting. Henry Adams was in Egypt on his honeymoon in 1873 but left no published record of his reactions. His wife, however, who was easily shocked, wrote disapprovingly from Karnak to her father. "Last evening," she told him, "we saw some dancing girls at the consul's house, but were not amused or pleased." Twenty years after Karnak, Adams saw the belly dance again, this time at the Chicago Fair. In a letter to his friend John Hay (later Secretary of State), Adams wrote that he found the Midway a "sweet repose," adding: "I reveled in all its fakes and frauds, all its wickedness that seemed not to be understood by our innocent natives, and all its genuineness which was understood still less."

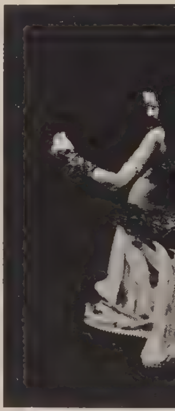
The dance that the nineteenth-century audience saw was the traditional muscular one. Out of it has developed the superior, more recent dance, in which there is greater movement and less exposure of the body. The performer begins with a veil wrapped around her head and shoulders and walks about for a few moments. She soon removes the veil and executes rhythmic movements of various parts of the body, as the music alternates fast and slow in accordance with her preference and arrangement. One early movement is made by the belly alone: it is pulled in and pushed out smoothly. The dancer may next move her breasts sideways as she walks about or stands still. Then she may start rolling her hips upward, sideward, and downward as she moves her belly in the opposite direction; this popular movement is executed while stationary or while making a side step. In the next stage of the performance the dancer strikes a series of dramatic tableaux during which the music is slow and consists of a series of solos by various instruments. She follows with quick, swinging movements that carry her around the floor to lively rhythms, and then takes up her "castanets" (that is, metal clappers called *sagāt* in Arabic and not to be confused with the wooden castanets of the Spanish dancer), and the audience reinforces the rhythm with hand clapping; if the atmosphere is not too modern and forbidding, some men in the audience may rise and dance at their places or even with the dancer. Further conventional and special movements follow in accordance with dancers' talents: shaking of shoulders and breasts and hips, and, a deep back bend; a few turns in place conclude the dance.

ENGRAVINGS N.Y. PUB. LIB.





Saliha is seen at right; at left is one of her predecessors with a tambourine. The engraving at far left is from a work by Jean-Léon Gérôme, a nineteenth-century artist noted for his Arab genre scenes.



Although the dancers now move about much more than they did in the nineteenth century, the belly dance is still essentially one of form rather than locomotion. Most Western dancing involves movement across large spaces, but in the belly dance the main movements are not of the legs but of the arms, hands, torso, and hips. The good belly dancer strives for smooth, circular, elliptical, and undulating motions rather than sharp, angular ones. Hoda Shams Eddin, a leading dancer in Egypt for more than a decade now, says that the effect must be sinuous. "The flute," she told me, moving her hands expressively through the air, "makes the *sound* of the serpent. So I must make his movements." Indeed, like the serpent, the dancer moves slowly, in undulations. Both are in a sense all torso and no legs. Because locomotion is only incidental, good belly dancers train themselves in the graceful movement of as many parts of the body as possible. To achieve proper use of the arms, hands, and head, the best of them have studied ballet with Mlle Sonia Ivanova. Born in Russia and trained in England, she has been Cairo's leading ballet teacher for more than a quarter of a century; she has never felt the contempt or condescension for the belly dance that is now increasingly expressed in the Middle East.

I should like to emphasize three features of the belly dance: it is a series of "stills"; it stresses sexual modesty as well as display; it is sedative as well as stimulating.

Since the belly dancer achieves her main effects by moving various parts of her body while standing still or in a graceful but slow walk, the total impression is one of a succession of still pictures. Like Arab art in general, it depends upon form, the arrangement of parts within a compressed area, as in a mosaic or geometric pattern. For it is not only abandon that the dancer aims for, but also restraint and control. Though the cumulative effect and denouement of the dance are often compared (by inexperienced observers quick to adopt profound metaphors) to the rise and fall of the sexual act itself, I do not think this is any truer of the belly dance than it is of most others. Many kinds of temporal art, of course, build up to an emotional impact and then offer release, just as forms in nature move in waves and cycles.

The belly dance is sexual, to be sure, but it is so in the tension it creates between display and modesty, exposure and concealment. The dancer alternates provocative movements with sedate poses and gestures. At the start she uses the veil to reveal and conceal, without (if she is good) any overtones of the coquettish or coy. She uses her hands and arms gracefully for the same purpose, now hiding her face and now revealing it, for in some sections of Middle Eastern society, where the West has penetrated least, it is still more modest to conceal the face than other parts of the body. This attitude induced Flaubert to write to his mother when he arrived in Alexandria: ". . . if you don't see their faces, you see their entire bosoms. As you change countries, you find that modesty changes its location, like a bored traveler who keeps shifting from one seat in the carriage to another."

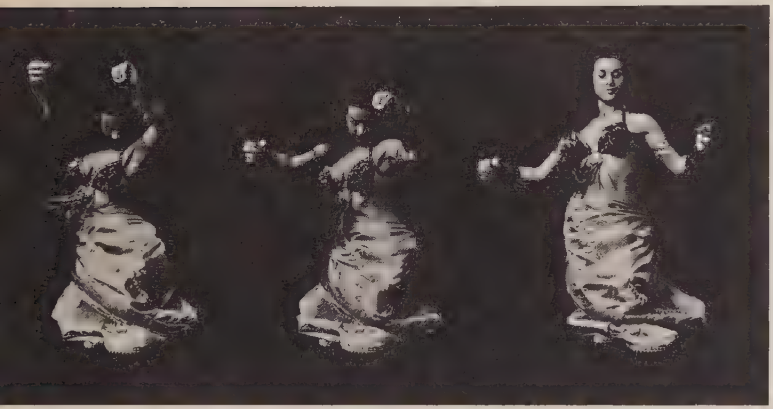
By combining modesty with display and by its flowing, undulating movements, the belly dance has a pacifying quality that attenuates its sexual excitement. Upon the Arab, perhaps more than upon the Westerner, the dancer's regular, smooth, and liquid movements often have a semi-hypnotic effect, alternating with a stimulating one that makes him want to dance, too. The sexual side is by no means lost upon him, but, I am convinced from observing many kinds of audiences, it is counteracted by a purely visual pleasure in the motion of the dance and an aural delight in the music. In its own milieu the appeal of the belly dance is one of pure voyeurism.

It is instructive to compare the belly dance with that similarly popular but often depreciated American (and now European) attraction, the strip tease. The differences are profound. Just as the essence of the belly dance is motion within a limited space, so the essence of the strip tease is display during locomotion. The key to both is in the climax: in the strip tease, nudity (or as close to it as the dancer can safely get); in the belly dance, motion. In the Western dance, the music is incidental; in the Oriental dance, it is enjoyed for its own sake and moves the audience to participate by clapping hands, swaying the body, and even by getting up to join in the dancing. In the strip tease, display is so central that attention is riveted upon the dancer's clothing and her manipulation of it; in the belly dance, the eye follows the dancer's body beneath her clothing, for the movements of her head, shoulders, arms, and hands are as important as those of her torso. The one is meant to excite sexual desire, the other to excite but also to pacify. The strip tease is voyeurism, too, but in it the prospect of nudity promises something which is never delivered; the belly dance promises nothing beyond itself, no imagined climax. So the strip tease is Western in its logical emphasis upon the ultimate—nudity—and its coy retreat from climax, while the belly dance is Oriental in its partially sedative quality and in the acquiescence of an audience that demands less from the dancer but gets all that is promised.

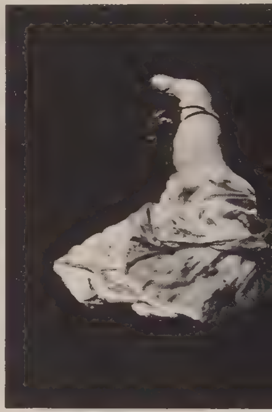
Modernization has wrought changes not only in the belly dance itself but in the life of the dancers as well. No longer do they come primarily from families of dancers; the decision to follow the career is now a more deliberate and personal one. Nor do they instruct ladies any more in the arts of seduction and love The leading cabaret dancers in the Middle East today are Westernized young women who think about managers, contracts, and films. Some move in a world of sports cars, Paris gowns, fancy villas, and real-estate deals. They are, moreover, no longer prostitutes available to anyone with the price of admission. Their private moral character is probably no worse or better than that of young women in America or Europe who want to be paid for their beauty or talent in the entertainment business.

In one respect, however, belly dancing as a career today is similar to what it was a hundred years ago and more: it is still an avenue (narrow and uphill, but open) to fame and material success for girls who would otherwise wind up as the wives of underpaid factory and farm laborers or minor clerks, raising five or six children in poverty, dirt, and ill health. The average laborer in a Middle Eastern city makes about ten dollars a week. Even a cheap dancer who spends her nights in a bar cajoling men to buy drinks makes twice as much, and the good dancers in cabarets make thirty dollars a night; a very successful dancer may draw as much as five hundred dollars a week in a night club, and earn more for special appearances. She doesn't keep it all, of course. Most dancers have agents, who take the usual ten per cent fee, and publicity costs; all have to provide their own costumes, which cost from fifty to five hundred dollars each. What success costs the belly dancer in favors she must return for favors given is another matter. Middle Eastern show business is populated by the same kind of promoters, hangers-on, and phony movie producers as its Western counterpart.

Until a decade or so ago, a girl became a belly dancer by convincing a cabaret owner or director that she had enough talent to join the chorus. She would learn a few rudiments in rehearsals, carefully study the famous dancers in cabarets and films, and work for a break that would enable her to become a soloist. Nowadays the system is not much different, except that the learning period seems to be shorter, and there is a small number of men who give formal instruction in the art. One of the best is Ibrahim Akif, who comes from a family of acrobats and dancers. In a dilapidated building in one of Cairo's big squares just beyond the downtown area known to tourists, he has a shabby, dimly lit studio unannounced by any sign. To it come ambitious girls who think they are attractive and talented enough to convince Akif to give them lessons. Several months of instruction cost about two hundred dollars. This is so high for most of the pupils that they usually pay a small amount as they learn and the rest after they are employed. A typical aspirant I saw was Raga', the twenty-year-old daughter of a retired government clerk. She was small and had a pretty face but was a bit heavy for a modern cabaret dancer. Weary of her menial, low-paying clerical job, she was determined to become a popular dancer at any cost. Though she was afraid to tell her father of her plans, she meant to realize them even if she had to face banishment from home. Her instructor, a young assistant to Akif was more cynical about her situation. Her father, he said, probably knew about her activity but winked at it in the hope that he might benefit if she succeeded. Raga' was willing enough, yet to me it appeared that her body would never do the things that were demanded of it. She was always good-natured about her excessive weight, her clumsiness, and her inability to imitate her instructor's extraordinary muscular control. Despite Akif's assurances that she would become a star, I felt she could never be more than one of the solo dancers in a cheap cabaret, a status to which she would soon adjust herself however.



Before performing the classic back bend, Saliha sinks to her knees (left) while shaking her shoulders and bust. At right she is seen moving in a wide arc, bending down to the floor and then rising again.



One of the streets leading from the square in which Akif has his studio is called Shari'a al Qal'a, Citadel Street. For more than a hundred years it has been the center for Cairo's native professional musicians, and it continues to be the home of famous dancers who perform the traditional dance at native celebrations such as weddings and birthdays. Here is the school of the old muscular dance which Flaubert, Curtis, and Adams saw and which formed the basis of the more artful modern dance we have been discussing until now. Another such district in Cairo is Bab al Sha'riyah. One street there still bears traces of the past in its name, Shari'a al Tabila, Drum Street. In one of the buildings on this street lives Hurriyah Ahmad, whose life and career are typical of this class of dancers—a class now more than ever hidden from the foreigner.

Hurriyah is about forty years old and lives with her husband, an accordion player and owner of a musical instrument shop, and her three daughters and two sons. Her mother and grandmother were dancers, as are her sisters. Sometimes Hurriyah accepts solo dates for herself, but more often she supplies a troupe of singers and dancers whom she trains and manages herself. For the latter kind of date, she gets thirty to fifty dollars, depending upon the number of entertainers and the client's capacity to pay, out of which she pays each established dancer in her troupe about seven dollars. A dancer also gets tips from members of the audience, who, following an old custom, place coins or bills on her forehead, shoulders, or in her bosom as she approaches them in turn. Hurriyah also teaches singing and dancing to her own daughters; to others who come for free lessons, join her troupe, and are paid a dollar or so when they perform until their training period is over; and to a succession of girls who, under special circumstances, come to live with her as members of the family.

One such girl was Samia, seventeen years old when I saw her in Hurriyah's home last year, who was "adopted" by Hurriyah's husband and took his name, Abu Kahla. Born into a poor peasant family in Tanta, a city about halfway between Cairo and Alexandria, she became interested in dancing when very young. She used to visit an aunt from time to time who lived in a Cairo suburb. One day she told her parents she was going to stay with her aunt, but instead took a job as a servant-girl in Cairo and went often to Citadel Street to try to become a dancer. On her rounds she met Hurriyah's husband and asked him to help her. "She had talent," he told me, "and needed help. If she continued in the same way, she might soon end up in a bad way, as many country girls do. So I had her examined physically to be sure of her purity and then we took her into our home." There Samia was one of the family, and was a companion to Hurriyah's sixteen-year-old daughter, Labiba, also a dancer. The two girls never went out alone. They usually stayed up most of the night even when they did not dance, slept during the day, and spent their spare time practicing, watching television, and going to the movies.

Hurriyah holds Samia in a customary apprenticeship that is a combination of kindness and exploitation. She pays Samia about five dollars for each performance but keeps the money for her. Out of it she buys the girl her costumes and takes a small amount for her board. If Samia marries while she is still in the household, Hurriyah and her husband will act as her parents. In five years or so, if she has not yet married, Samia will probably leave Hurriyah anyway to make her way as a dancer and, of course, to try for stardom in the limited circle of the traditional belly dancers. Meanwhile, she is both protected and used. Yet, from Hurriyah's point of view, it is not always clear who is exploiting whom. She says she has had several such girls living with her who, when they made good elsewhere, have forgotten her.

Hurriyah emphasized that she is not an "artiste," that is, a dancer who works in cabarets, drinks with customers for a percentage of the bill, and gets ahead by pleasing powerful men. She is, she insists, a *fanāna*, which is simply the Arabic word for "artiste" but without the immoral connotation of the French word. The *fanāna* is married, usually to a musician, and professes to live a conventional life. On the surface she usually does, and indeed her home is often a model of pathetic respectability, but many people who claim to know the facts often deride these protestations of virtue.

Dancers like Hurriyah are not encouraged by the Egyptian government. Yet the regime, with all its involvement in economic development and a busy foreign policy, has still found the time to deal with the dance. The government promotes folkloric dancing and ballet, and tries to chasten the kind of belly dancing that is seen by foreign tourists. It has given the recently created state Ballet Institute the very highest priority in an extensive cultural program, and has sent several Egyptian girls to study ballet in the Soviet Union.

The press, which is owned and operated by the government, gives favorable treatment to folklore and ballet and either ignores belly dancing or points up its presumed decline. Last year, for example, an article in a popular illustrated weekly extolled ballet as the finest type of dance, one without provocative shaking, a dance "addressed to the soul." Ballet reached its peak in Russia, the writer generously granted, but it is now returning to Egypt, the land of its origin. As for the folkloric dancing encouraged by the government, it has a certain affinity to the belly dance, and is certainly Egyptian in spirit and origin. Some observers, however, wonder whether the influence of Russian teachers has not made it into something else—interesting and pleasing, but not very Egyptian.

As a further step to discourage the belly dance, the government in 1955 required the dancers to cover themselves from shoulders to ankles, even if with nothing more than the most diaphanous of materials. Not that they were unduly exposed, anyway; cabaret dancers customarily wore much less than any belly dancer who might be appearing on the same program. (But cabaret dancers are "Western" and so do not reflect upon Egypt's cultural reputation.) Because the modern belly dance does not depend much on muscular display, it has not been hampered by the new requirement—although Egyptians associated with belly dancing have been quick to point out the hypocrisy of a policy that requires entertainers to cover their bodies while permitting men and women in shorts and bikinis close contact on crowded beaches.

The belly dance has gone through many changes over the centuries and has often enough in the past been the object of official condemnation and restriction. It has been vulgarized and chastened in turn. Its name has been euphemized. But since its continuing popularity in its various forms has never depended on governmental support, Egyptians feel that it will survive because it arises from something in their spirit that goes deeper than the policy of any political regime.

Morroe Berger is Director of the Program in Near Eastern Studies at Princeton University. This article is based in part on one he wrote for Dance Perspectives, *No. 10, and on further research in Egypt last year. He is also the author of the long study of the Black Muslims published in the Winter, 1964, issue of* HORIZON.

The Corn of Coxcatlán

By VANCE BOURJAILY

Corn was more precious to the American Indian than all the gold of the Andes. Where did the sacred plant come from, and who first thought of growing it?

When I visited the Tehuacán Valley of Mexico last year, I already knew that it had been the scene of an archaeological discovery no less exciting, though less famous, than the finding of the Dead Sea Scrolls or the ruins of Troy.

In terms of something to exhibit, photograph, or write headlines about, the discovery was certainly unimpressive: a piece of dried vegetable matter, less than two inches long—finger-shaped, withered, but looking considerably younger than its age, which was about seven thousand years. It was a cob of wild corn, almost certainly an extinct plant, gone perhaps as long as Montezuma or the last Inca, probably much longer, and it had been far more crucial to the cultures they inherited than any king or emperor ever was. Its discovery in Mexico settled scientific controversies about the corn plant's form, existence, evolution, and place of origin which had been going on for more than three hundred years.

The final and successful search, which had been preceded by many others, lasted twelve years, off and on, and began with a botanist and an archaeologist drinking tea together at Harvard. By the time they were done they had brought in something like two dozen other distinguished scholars from foundations, universities, and government departments in three countries—the United States, Mexico, and Canada; and they had spent around one hundred thousand dollars. It seems fitting that this marshaling of funds and intellects should have been directed not toward finding lost gold or buried cities but toward solving the problem of the origin of corn, a plant very nearly as important to our political and economic life as it was to the pre-Columbians. Fitting or not, such a project is quite representative of the direction of archaeology today: away from a quaint, rather greedy past of palaces and gentleman adventurers and toward a disciplined present of highly technical research by sophisticated scientists into the details of daily life among the ancients.

The botanist involved in the corn find is Paul C. Mangelsdorf, Fisher professor of natural history and head of the Botanical Museum at Harvard. The archaeologist is Richard S. MacNeish, a director of the Robert S. Peabody Foundation for Archaeology.

Mangelsdorf had always been interested in corn, but MacNeish came to it in a roundabout way. He first arrived in Mexico in 1948 to study the connection between the ancient Mexicans and the Southeastern mound-builders of the lower Mississippi Valley. There was a huge, unexplored gap between the two cultures—that of the Gulf coast of Texas and of the whole Mexican state of Tamaulipas. If there really was a connection between the mound-builders and Mexico, it was in this area that evidence of it would have to appear. MacNeish got a grant to survey the region.

One of the frustrations of an American archaeologist's life is that there is so much to be done, spread out over the geographical immensity of two continents; so, having spent some time in the huge, unstudied Gulf Coast area, where he noted various kinds of occupation evidence (including pre-ceramic, which is to say very early), MacNeish next found himself—because of conditions attached to another grant that he had applied for—making an extensive survey of Iroquois pottery, which took him frequently into Canada.

"One morning I was talking with Douglas Leechman, of the National Museum of Canada," he told me. "As much for conversation as for anything else, I was describing my interest in the Tamaulipas–East Texas gap. I was comparing it to the Mackenzie River basin in the Northwest Territories. It is generally assumed that the ancestors of the American Indians had migrated down through there, but no one had ever dug along the Mackenzie to check the assumption. Another gap, you see? At noon that day I met Mr. Leechman again for lunch, and he started right out by saying, 'Mr. MacNeish, we like your project.'

"I probably said, 'Huh?'

" 'Of course, you couldn't start digging in the Mackenzie basin before summer,' he said."

At this time, the fall of 1948, MacNeish was busy with a number of things. He had his Ph.D. dissertation to hand in at Chicago, a course or two to finish, reports on various field projects to write, and work to do toward getting a new grant so that he could return to Mexico. Most of these things went pretty well, pushing the curiously interested reaction to him in Canada to the back of his mind; only the new grant presented a problem.

"When it hadn't come through by the end of the year, I borrowed a thousand dollars from my sister and went back anyway," he told me. "My heart was in Mexico. I dug caves in Tamaulipas, early man sites, and found a great deal, including, among the other food remains, the first corn in Mexico that dated from preceramic times. The corn seemed incidental to me—interesting, but no more so than other things. I was just finishing up the season there when a set of civil-service blanks arrived from Canada, inviting me to apply for appointment as archaeologist to the Canadian Museum.

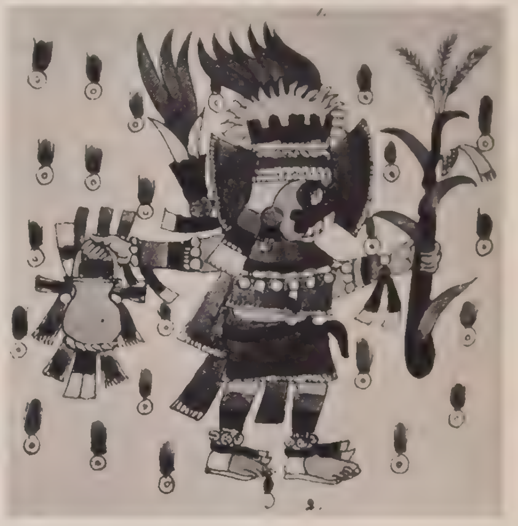
"I filled them in, sold my jeep, flew to Canada, and was sworn in. A few days later I was off to Edmonton to organize my first northern digging. One of the last-minute things I had to do before leaving Mexico was to dispose of the stuff I'd found in my caves. Various objects were left for appropriate people, including the corn, which was to be sent to a man named Mangelsdorf who, I understood, was a botanist working on a Rockefeller grant, classifying the various races of corn as part of the search for corn's origins."

As he went off to start work in Canada, MacNeish had only a sketchy idea of how complicated and controversial the corn problem was. As Paul Weatherwax has written: "From the standpoint of human interest an ear of corn is a masterpiece of perfection, but biologically it is a monstrosity." This is because, in its cultivated and only current form, the plant cannot propagate itself. The ears, which contain the seeds, are, or course, enclosed by husks, and there is no way for the seeds to scatter. If, for some reason, all corn planting were to cease, the plant would eventually disappear altogether.

The wild ancestor must have been different; at least, it must have been able to propagate itself. Might it still exist somewhere? Instead of having this unknown ancestor, did it evolve from some other wild, botanically related plants still known to exist? Was it really of American origin? The questions were not unlike those relating to human evolution, and the debate aroused by them, if narrower, was sometimes just as acrimonious.

When botanical historians turned to the earliest records, they became even more confused. Columbus himself is thought to have brought back the first grains of corn, but he did not distinguish it much from similar grains already known in Europe, such as sorghum. It was a time, of course, when no one really knew what the explorers were finding; learned men in the sixteenth century were unsure whether new continents were being discovered, or merely new coasts of Asia. The notion got around quite generally that Indian corn was of Turkish origin, and it was not long before some Renaissance botanists were confidently illustrating in their herbals not one but two kinds of wild corn—one from India and one from Turkey.

FROM *Antiquities of Mexico* BY LORD KINGSBOROUGH, 1831



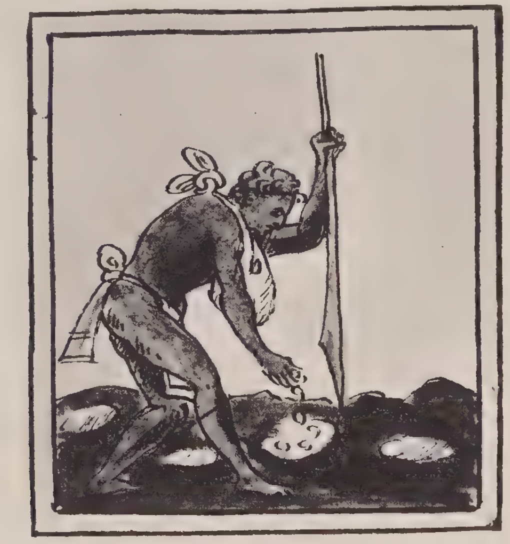
An Aztec rain-god is shown carrying a stalk of maize in one hand and a jar containing rain in the other.

During this time there were widespread and generally unrecorded plantings of the new crop in many parts of the Old World. One of the more fateful of them, it seems, for the false lead it would provide four hundred years later, was an introduction of Brazilian corn by the Portuguese into the back country of India. There it persisted, even reverting to a more primitive state, until early in this century, when its rediscovery gave those who held out for the Asian origin of corn (a group as stubborn as those who believe Bacon wrote Shakespeare) something to get excited over. Their theories finally collapsed when Mangelsdorf went to India for a while to study this crude corn. He concluded that it was a primitive race, all right, but of cultivated corn—not, at last, the wild plant he had been seeking.

Meanwhile, another archaeological corn find had been made, though not in Mexico, which preceded MacNeish's discovery by a few months. This was corn found in Bat Cave, New Mexico, by Hubert Dick, in August of 1948. "Accumulated trash, garbage, and excrement in this [Bat] cave," Mangelsdorf wrote later, describing the find, "contained cobs and other parts of corn at all levels, and these cobs and parts showed a distinct evolutionary sequence from the lower to the upper levels. At the bottom of the refuse, which was some two meters deep, Dick found tiny cobs, two to three centimeters long, which were dated by radiocarbon determinations of associated charcoal about 3600 B.C."

These little cobs were not yet those of wild corn, but they were assumed to be pretty close to it. They were a popcorn—that is, their kernels would explode when heated—and at the same time a pod corn, that is, a kind in which each kernel is enclosed in what botanists call glumes. (One gets vestigial glumes, when eating corn, stuck between one's teeth.) With this information to go on, Mangelsdorf undertook a fascinating experiment: he crossed modern popcorn with pod corn, producing a hybrid. Then he kept back crossing the hybrid with popcorn until he had achieved a pod-popcorn whose husks would open at maturity. This, he felt, was reconstructed wild corn; it could reproduce itself readily, and it served, as Mangelsdorf says, a "useful purpose in showing the archaeologist approximately what to look for in seeking prehistoric wild corn."

BIBLIOTECA LAURENZIANA, FLORENCE



A Mexican Indian planting corn is depicted in the Codex Florentino, a sixteenth-century manuscript decorated by Aztec painters.

In 1951, wanting to write a report on his Tamaulipas work, MacNeish returned to Mexico for a time and tried to learn what had become of the things he had dug up. The answer, it turned out, was nothing. Through some mix-up, the finds were intact but undistributed; he decided to pack up all the vegetable remains and bring them back to the United States for dating and for dispersal to various experts.

Once he had disposed of them, MacNeish returned to his Northwest Territories excavations. The next time he got in from the field, he says, he found two letters waiting. One, from Dr. W. F. Libby, said: "Your corn has a radiocarbon date of 2500 B.C., plus or minus seventy-five years." The other, from Mangelsdorf, said: "Yours is the most primitive corn yet found"—that is, it was less evolved, though dated later, than Bat Cave corn.

"I switched the letters," MacNeish told me. "I sent a copy of Libby's to Mangelsdorf, and vice versa."

These documents had barely had time to reach their destinations when there was a phone call from Mangelsdorf asking him to fly down to Harvard. When he got there, MacNeish discovered that his corn samples were all jumbled, as far as chronology went. Some of the directions for their arrangement had been lost.

"Can you lay them out according to the levels at which you found them?" Mangelsdorf asked, and MacNeish said he'd try. When he was done, Mangelsdorf asked:

"Do you know anything about botany?"

"No," said MacNeish.

"You've put them into a precise evolutionary sequence," the botanist said. "From a primitive race of corn through several stages to some of the hybrids that are still being grown. We've got to get more of this stuff."

This was when the two sat down to tea—served in corn-shaped cups, with corn wafers to eat. Professor Mangelsdorf's scientific devotion to corn is not unlike the almost religious devotion shown by many Mexican Indians, who still, out of reverence, plant a few fields of Nal-Tel and Chapalote—two of the ancient strains of corn—alongside more modern and productive strains.

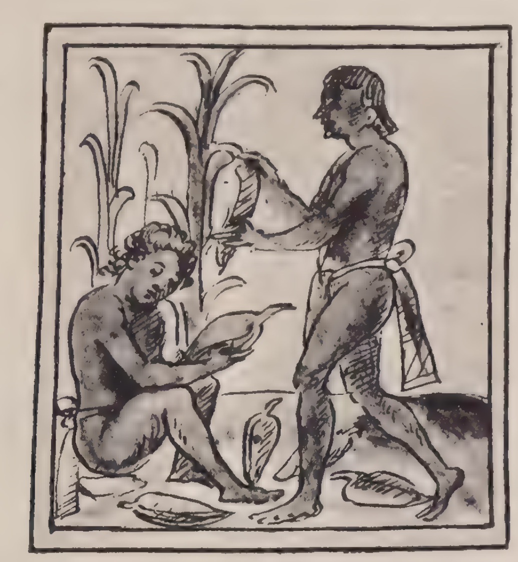
"When can you go back to Tamaulipas?" Mangelsdorf wanted to know.

"At first I thought he was kidding," MacNeish says. "I told him that I was certain I could find more ancient corn down there, but that I'd require three years and twenty thousand dollars to guarantee it. He insisted that money was no problem.

"I went back to where I was staying, had supper, and went to bed. It seemed to me I was tired, from the trip and the day's work, but instead of going off to sleep, I pitched and tossed and drove jeeps around in Tamaulipas.

"Finally, I got up and went to a portable typewriter and began to develop a description of a project. I worked on it till seven thirty in the morning. At eight thirty I met Mangelsdorf for breakfast, and gave him what I'd written. He read it, and we talked about details, and by ten o'clock he was saying, 'all right, let's get you some money.' He had all sorts of blank applications to various funds lying around, and he started filling in several of them, asking for a couple of thousand here, a couple of thousand there."

"In 1953", MacNeish went on, "I made a quick trip to Mexico to get permits and arrange for a digging season the following year. In 1954, in November, we went down and began our survey. I heard about a guy who'd found a cave on his ranch and dug what was called a mummy out of it fifteen years earlier. I found the man on Christmas day, and he offered to take me out the next day, the twenty-sixth, to look for the cave. He was very helpful, but wasn't certain any longer where the cave had been. We went out on horseback in the rain, looking for it—no luck. Went out again the next day, same rain, same horses. We rode to the top of a mesa, as we had the day before. My rancher kept saying it had to be there somewhere, but we couldn't find it. We were about to turn back when a couple of cowboys came along and asked what we were looking for. When we told them, they laughed. We'd been riding back and forth all day in front of a clump of cactus that hid the entrance. Anyway, there was the cave. I went in. The floor was full of looters' holes, and there were corn cobs lying all around the edges of them. It was my twenty-eighth day of survey, and I had corn. We cut roads, built a camp, and hired a crew. It was the richest place in dried plant materials I'd seen yet, not just corn but beans and pumpkins and gourds."



In another illustration from the Codex Florentino, two Indians harvest and husk sizeable ears of corn.

The corncobs, when they reached Mangelsdorf, were disappointing. They were no earlier than the 1951 samples; in fact they were later. At the end of the season, on his way back to resume summer digging in Canada, MacNeish and Mangelsdorf conferred again. There had been a new development in the meantime: another Harvard professor, named E. S. Barghoorn, had made microscopic studies of dirt taken from a drill core which had gone down more than two hundred feet in the valley of Mexico, considerably south of Tamaulipas. They showed some pollen identified as that of wild maize going back perhaps eighty thousand years, to the last interglacial period.

"Mangelsdorf thought perhaps we should be looking as much farther south as the coast of Peru," MacNeish told me. "I still liked Mexico. So we split the difference. We tried Guatemala and Honduras in 1958. In 1959 I moved back north a little to Chiapas, found pollen again there, and found corn, too. But it wasn't any earlier than what we had already."

It seemed likely that the site where corn was first domesticated was somewhere between Chiapas, the southernmost state of Mexico, and Tamaulipas, the most northeasterly. The area of search had been narrowed down to just a few hundred thousand square miles.

Actually, of course, it was much narrower than that. Wild corn was a grass, probably a highland grass; but for there to be any chance of finding it preserved, it would have to have been a desert grass as well—for only in the driest desert caves are ancient vegetable samples ever found. By the time MacNeish had surveyed parts of Oaxaca and Guerrero, and had decided their caves were not too promising, there were not many major, dry, highland valleys left; one of the few was that of Tehuacán.

This is a valley seventy miles long and twenty wide, where rain falls seasonally, during only four months of a normal year, so that the annual total of moisture is low; there are strong springs in the valley, though, which help extend the growing season by irrigation. Thus, although it is a desert most of the time, Tehuacán agriculture might be compared to that of our own in the Northern States: it must take advantage of a short growing season terminated regularly by radical climatic change—dryness here, winter there.

Mexico has considerable public interest in its archaeology. In 1961 a questionnaire was sent out to the country's schoolteachers asking them to make local inquiries and report on all the possible archaeological sites that townsmen knew of. When MacNeish arrived in Tehuacán, a pleasant resort city in the center of the valley, he was given access to this formidable collection of raw documents—formidable because the valley is quite literally covered with archaeological sites of all periods, the remains of five thousand years or so of pre-Columbian occupation. Among the hundreds reported, MacNeish was interested, of course, primarily in caves. To help him check them out he was lent a 1942 army command truck and a soldier to drive it. MacNeish described it as follows.

"One of the schoolteachers had reported on hearsay that there was a cave near Coxcatlán, a tiny desert village. After I'd seen thirty-six others, we got to that one. We hired a local guide to take us to it, but it was just a little cave. I told the guide we wanted something bigger, and it turned out that he knew of another. We went there, made some test holes, and found some preservation, but it didn't seem to be quite what I wanted. Meanwhile, the guide, who was enjoying the off-season wages, thought of yet another cave, a big one, and took us there. It was an eight-mile walk from where we had to leave the command truck; it took us two hours. But when we arrived, it looked right; it was a good big cave, the thirty-ninth I had looked at.

"The guide became a digger; we hired a couple more and went back the next day. We took off a layer of goat dung, and I laid out a trench. We went down four occupation levels and found a sandal, primitive looking and quite well-preserved.

"I decided this had to be it, and I had the boys start making a road so that we could drive in closer. We started digging in earnest, then, and began to get into stuff—potsherds and so on. By the third day we were through the ceramic remains and into loose gravel which seemed quite sterile. I figured we were about to get to the cave floor, and that I'd drawn another blank.

"But on the fourth day, when we'd dug through the gravel, we hit a layer of ashy soil and in it there were artifacts. Chipped stone things. Pre-ceramic.

"I was out of the trench, sorting them, when a digger called, 'I found a corncob.'

"I ran over to the trench. They were pretty far down—I was looking at the tops of their heads. 'You sure it didn't fall in?' I asked. There was plenty of corn lying around on and near the surface. The digger said he was sure, and I got into the trench. His cob of corn was about the size of a cigarette.

"I looked all around for rat holes it might have slid down. There weren't any.

"Then I took the pick and started digging myself, and within an hour I'd found two more cobs, half the size of the first one. We went back to town, and I bought the boys a beer and wired Mangelsdorf: 'We've hit corn.'

"I sent a sample by air express, and it got lost. I wrapped the other two in foil, put the foil in a plastic bag, and the bag in a box, and flew up to Harvard with them myself.

" 'These are the earliest yet,' Mangelsdorf said when he saw them.

" 'They ought to be.' I said. 'Everything at that level looks very primitive. I've got some wood from the same layer—let's get it over to Michigan for dating." The radiocarbon dating method can be used only with organic substances, for it records the remaining radioactivity contained in all such materials. Decade by decade, the radioactivity diminishes; since the rate of loss is known, the age of the specimen can be determined by measuring what radioactivity is left. The process is expensive, however: the one hundred and four radiocarbon dates eventually accumulated for the Tehuacán project cost fifteen thousand dollars.

" 'Your corn seems very close to wild,' Mangelsdorf said. 'Is it a big cave?'

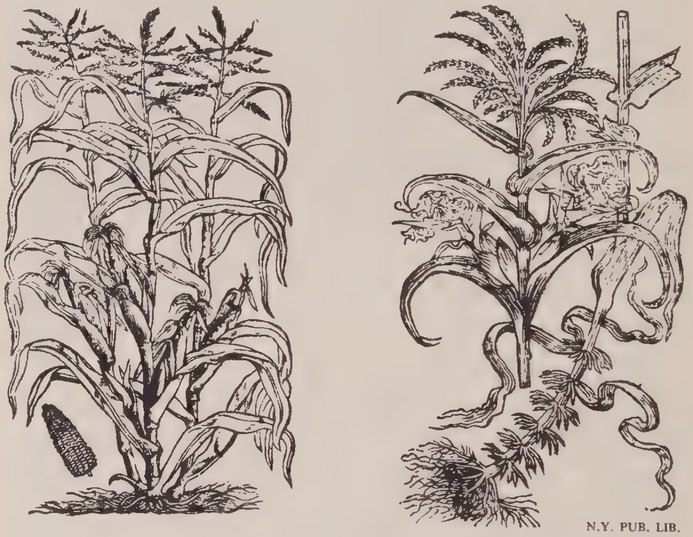
"I said it was, that there was plenty of it left to dig, and that I'd been hearing of others.

" 'We've just been practicing,' he replied. 'Now we're ready for the big leagues.' "

The conception and organization of a large, interdisciplinary scientific project was fascinating to MacNeish. Instead of packing up materials for experts to study at home, they would now bring the experts themselves to Mexico. Instead of using one's own car or jeep, or borrowing them locally, the expedition would buy whatever vehicles and equipment were necessary, and a headquarters building would be leased, with its own kitchen and living quarters. (Later, when wives of the various associated specialists began to come along, it got too cramped to live at the headquarters; for one thing, what had started as bedrooms were soon crammed with finds of all kinds, from bones to textiles, undergoing classification.)

The first choice to be made was that of a sponsoring institution, and while Harvard was willing and the Smithsonian was considered, it was decided that the best strategy for approaching the major foundations would be through a smaller entity which was not currently asking for anything else. Someone, encountered at a conference, suggested the Robert S. Peabody Foundation for Archaeology at Andover, Massachusetts. It was very small, had a solid record of achievement and publication, and nothing currently on hand. Its directors, Douglas Byers and Frederick Johnson, were experienced fund raisers and administrators, and could give help in the field as well—Byers with geographical investigations and Johnson with dating problems. Under their guidance an application was made to the National Science Foundation for sixty-five thousand dollars to be used for three years of excavation and study.

Well before the time when the grant was officially announced, there was reliable word that it would be given; MacNeish resigned from his Canadian job, took the title of Research Associate of the Peabody Foundation, and began recruiting a field staff. The original grant covered only the first projected year, and was eight thousand dollars less than MacNeish and Mangelsdorf felt they needed for that period. Supplementary funds had to be raised, and they were obtained from the Rockefeller Foundation. Thereafter, because the first year showed success, the National Science Foundation supported the remainder of the project and will finance the publication (in six volumes, by twenty-one authors) of its findings.


N.Y. PUB. LIB.

These illustrations, from an old English herbal, show "corne of Asia" (left), and "Turky corne" (right); the plant was then thought to have originated in the East.

But nowhere within this extensive publication, I suspect, will one be able to find, in narrative form, a description of the exact, climactic moment when the first cob of wild corn was found; nor can I supply it. It was not an object, like a golden idol with ruby eyes, which the archaeologist uncovers, and holds up, saying: "Here. We have found the treasure." Nor, as I understand it, could the botanist, had he been on hand when the first particular relic of wild corn was picked up to be wrapped in foil, have recognized it for certain.

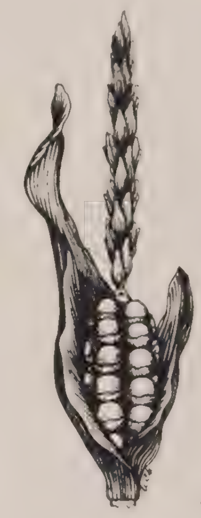
Instead, from extensive excavation in five different caves, came 12,857 intact cobs. A number of these, marked as coming from the earliest occupation levels, were found to date between 5200 and 3400 B.C. After careful laboratory study, the botanist concludes that among these earliest cobs are many of wild corn, giving six reasons which I shall paraphrase from Dr. Mangelsdorf: 1) The cobs are uniform in size and other characteristics, as is true of most wild species; 2) the cobs have fragile spines, as do the seed heads of many wild grasses, which break easily so that the seeds may scatter; 3) the glumes are long and must partly have enclosed the kernels, as they do in other wild grasses; 4) there are sites in the valley well adapted to the growth of annual grasses, which competing perennial shrubs (mostly cacti) appear to shun; 5) there is no evidence from other plant species unearthed that agriculture had yet become well established in the period to which the cobs belong; and 6) the predominant corn from the next phase (3400 to 2300 B.C.), in which agriculture definitely was established, is larger and more variable than the earliest corn.

Accepting this, we learn that a mature ear of wild corn, the seed head of a tall annual grass, was about as thick as a pencil and an inch long; it was only partly enclosed by the leaves which we call husks, had a tassel growing out of the top, and was located at the top of the stem. It usually had eight rows of brown or orange kernels, an average of seven kernels to a row; each kernel was partly enclosed by chaff; and the food value of the whole ear was probably less than is contained in a single kernel of modern field corn.

The men of seven thousand years ago gathered wild corn in season as part of their subsistence pattern of hunting and collecting. These men lived in caves, finding food nearby during the wet season; they roamed, hunting and collecting whatever they could and very nearly starving, when it was dry. The population estimate for the entire valley in the preagricultural time is dramatically lonely: there were, before 6800 B.C., as the original population, three "microbands"—family groups probably—of four to eight persons each in the whole area.

In the period 5200 to 3400 they were just beginning to domesticate the plants they had been using wild—corn, chilis, avocados, and gourds. Whether small groups in other valleys were starting to plant the same seeds at more or less the same time is not known yet, though it is known that there are similarly early domestications of other plants in other regions (pumpkins in northeastern Mexico, sunflowers in the southwestern United States, potatoes and lima beans in the highlands of South America, according to MacNeish). In the next period, thanks to this developing food supply, the Tehuacán population increased ten times, to between 120 and 240 persons; the building of villages—instead of seasonal camps—then towns, then cities and temples, would now begin to be possible. The stone tools and pre-ceramic containers found with early domesticated corn were still crude, but, as Dr. Mangelsdorf points out: "Man's cultivars are artifacts as surely as are his weapon points or pottery."

As for corn, as soon as these early men began to plant it, they began to improve it, possibly by watering, certainly by removing other plants that would compete with it, so that corn grew larger. Then, in the same period, between 3400 and 2300 B.C., corn began to hybridize with either or both of two closely related and still extant plants, one or another of which recent botanists (Burbank was one) thought must be the actual ancestors of corn: teosinte and *Tripsacum*. Both are forage grasses, with tasseling seed heads; both are native to some parts of Mexico; and both continue to reproduce in their wild form. It was the hybridizing, certainly inadvertent on the part of the growers but fortunate for its effect on the productivity of individual plants, which consigned wild corn to extinction. Clouds of wind-borne pollen were produced by the hybrid corn; it could not have taken very many centuries before the remaining stands of wild corn were fertilized by this pollen and grew as hybrids the following year—to cease reproducing the year after. If there were isolated patches of wild corn left at the time the Spaniards arrived, which Mangelsdorf feels unlikely, it "was almost certainly rapidly extinguished after the arrival of the European colonists with their numerous types of grazing animals: horses, burros, cows, sheep, and—worst of all—the omnivorous and voracious goats."



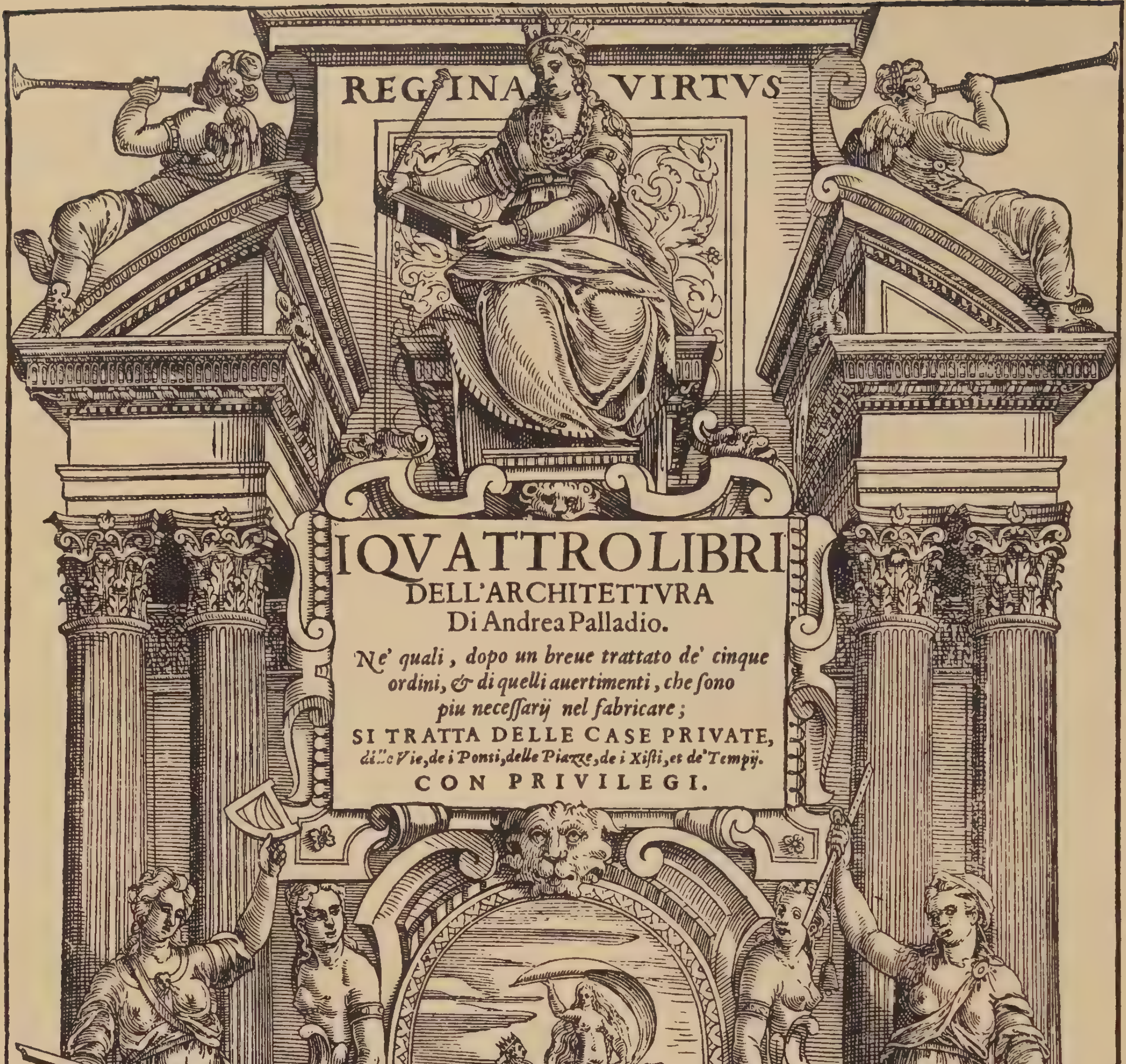
FROM *Science*, FEB. 7, 1964

The wild ancestor of corn probably looked like this, with tiny kernels and a cob only about an inch long.

It makes an affecting image: a sixteenth-century colonist's goat on top of a hill too steep for even the wind to climb, mildly chewing up the last sweet ears of wild corn left in the world. But one may see their like in the project headquarters at Tehuacán, and though there are differences in size and yield and many external characteristics, the little cobs are unmistakable. An uncoached layman, should he be shown one and asked to guess what it was, would be amused at its size, but he would call it corn, I feel quite certain, with no hesitation at all.

Vance Bourjaily is a well-known novelist and short-story writer, the author of, among other books, Confessions of a Spent Youth. *He has participated in several archaeological expeditions in Mexico.*

*For further reading: "The Origins of New World Civilization" by Richard S. MacNeish (*Scientific American, *November 1964) and "Ancient Mesoamerican Civilization" by MacNeish (*Science, *February 7, 1964); "Domestication of Corn" by Paul C. Mangelsdorf, Richard S. MacNeish, and Walton C. Galinat (*Science, *February 7, 1964);* Indian Corn in Old America *by Paul Weatherwax (The Macmillan Company, 1954).*



REGINA VIRTVS

I QVATTRO LIBRI
DELL'ARCHITETTVRA
Di Andrea Palladio.
Ne' quali, dopo un breue trattato de' cinque
ordini, & di quelli auertimenti, che ſono
piu neceſſarij nel fabricare;
SI TRATTA DELLE CASE PRIVATE,
delle Vie, de i Ponti, delle Piazze, de i Xiſti, et de' Tempij.
CON PRIVILEGI.

IN VENETIA,
Appreſſo Dominico de'
Franceſchi.
1570.

As the source of a style that held sway for at least two centuries, Andrea Palladio's Four Books of Architecture*—for which this is the frontispiece—is probably the most influential work on architecture ever written.*

PALLADIO

was not Palladian

The "Palladian style" was celebrated throughout the Western world, yet the Master's own works fit few of the formulas

By PIERRE SCHNEIDER

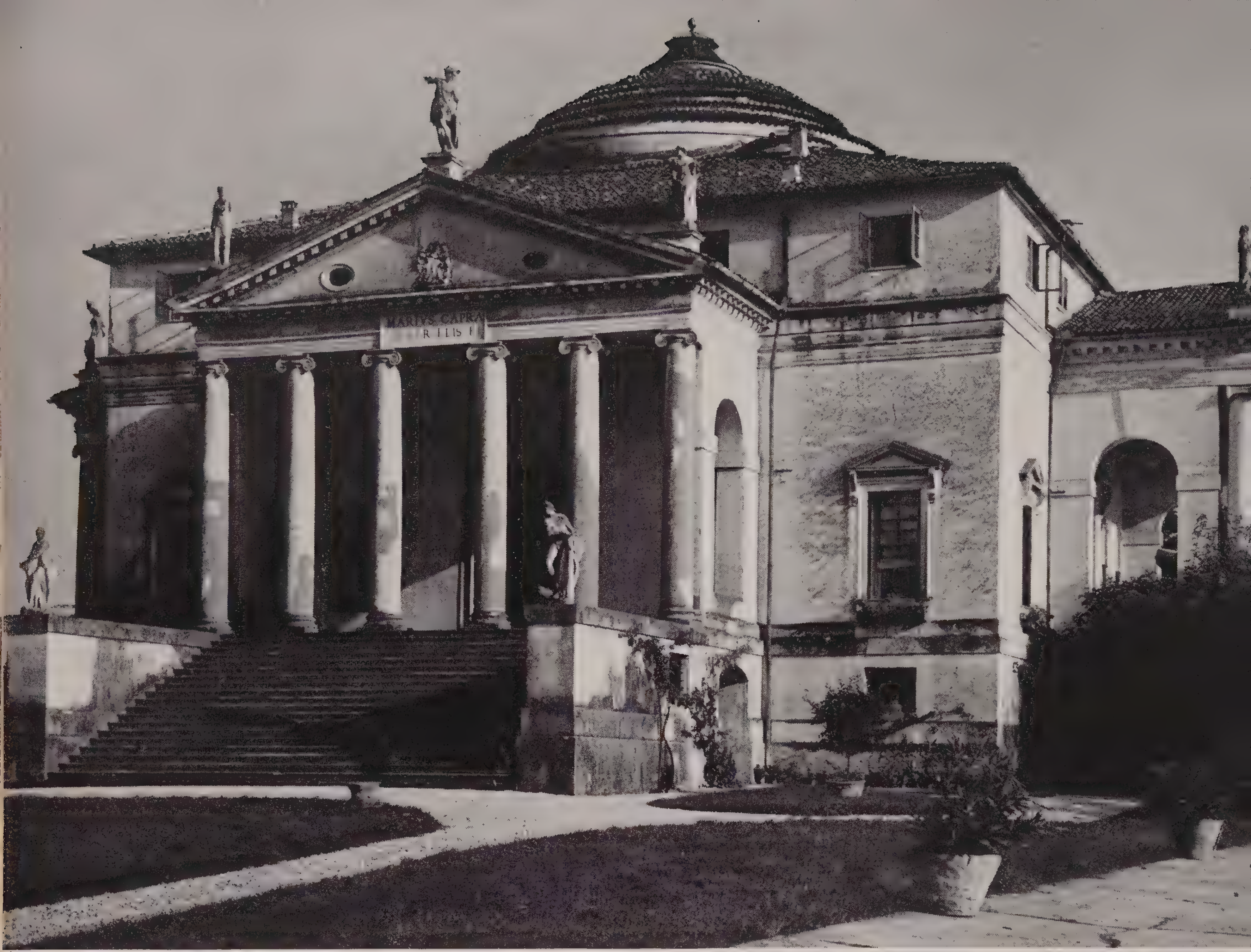
Anybody foolhardy enough to suggest, as I am about to do, that Andrea Palladio is unknown, must resign himself to being branded as mischievously paradoxical, frivolous, or ignorant. For if any architect has achieved universal fame and exerted world-wide influence, it is this man whom Vasari called *superbissimo*, *maraviglioso*, and *notabilissimo*, and who has been variously acclaimed as the Raphael, the Titian, and the Newton of his profession. "Whenever people want to praise a town house or a country residence, built by a modern architect, for its style or its composition, they say, '*C'est du Palladio*,'" wrote the French historian Quatremère de Quincy in 1830, two and a half centuries after the master's death. A few generations earlier, Francesco Milizia had noted petulantly, "It is enough for a building to have some good feature to be instantly hailed as Palladian."

If "Palladian" became in the eighteenth century the byword for so much architecture, it was because so much architecture was "Palladian." The Palladian façade spread across the Western world with a virulence of which only the postwar proliferation of the curtain-wall can give us any idea. Palladianism overran Europe and America with the wildfire fury, sudden remissions, and unpredictable recurrences of an epidemic. The telltale symptoms, especially the classical portico and pediment, appear not only in the region of Vicenza, Italy, where Palladio himself worked, but in such far places as Poland, Norway, Hungary, and Czarist Russia. Cases of Palladianism may be found even in France, as immunized against foreign intrusions as that country was by the strength of its native architectural traditions. The most conservative statistics would show Hogarth's complaint to be in no way exaggerated: "Were a modern architect to build a palace in Lapland, or the West-Indies, Palladio would be his guide, nor would he dare to stir a step without his book."

The most fertile terrain for the disease, however, was provided by England. "This you must leave to the English," noted Goethe; "they have long known how to appreciate what is good and they have a grandiose way of spreading it." With the Queen's House at Greenwich and the Banqueting House in Whitehall, Inigo Jones proved himself Palladio's first non-Italian disciple, and

N.Y. PUB. LIB.

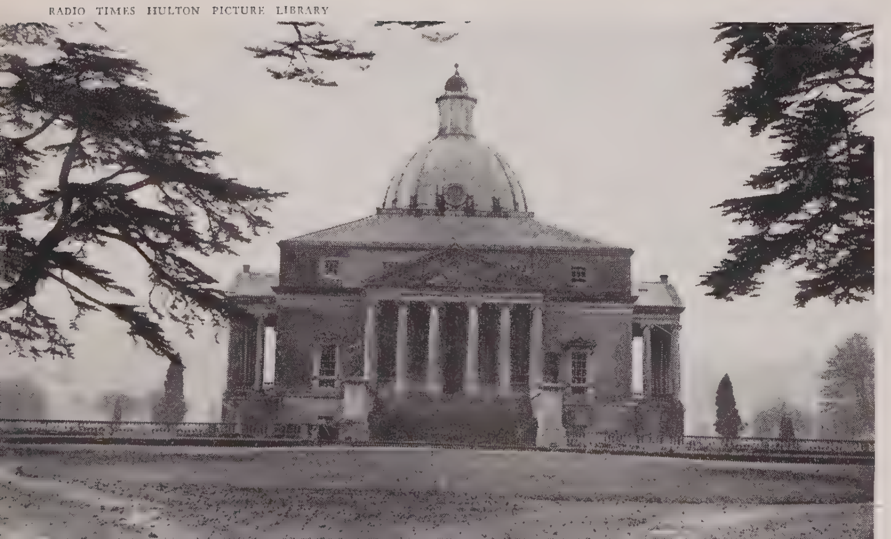
THE DECORATIVE INITIALS ON THESE PAGES ARE FROM A 1581 EDITION OF PALLADIO'S *Quattro* [illegible]



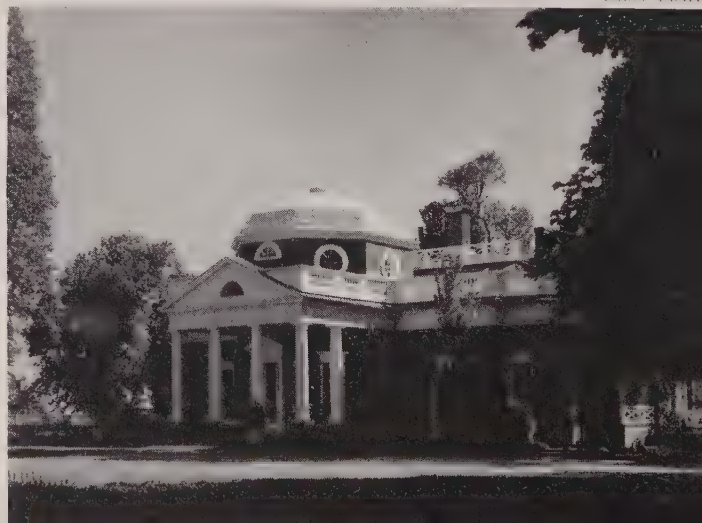
ROLLIE MCKENNA

Palladio's most famous villa, or at least the one most widely known, is La Rotonda in Vicenza—a square block with a shallow dome and identical porticoes on four sides. It inspired a host of imitations, of which the first and closest was Mereworth Castle in Kent (below left), begun about 1722 by Colen Campbell. His chief departure from the original was to heighten the dome—perhaps a concession to the English climate, since he ran fireplace flues between the dome's inner and outer walls and concealed the chimney vents as windows in the lantern. An American version is Thomas Jefferson's Monticello (below right), first built in Georgian style in 1770–75 and completely remodeled between 1796 and 1808 in a free and imaginative Palladian style. This is a rather remote descendant of La Rotonda, as there are only two porticoes instead of four, an octagonal drum beneath the dome, different proportions, and other mutations.

RADIO TIMES HULTON PICTURE LIBRARY



UNION PACIFI



his greatest. A century later, that great patron of the arts, the third Earl of Burlington, catalyzed a new Palladio vogue; Alexander Pope, in his epistle to the noble dilettante, admonished rightly but, as usual, vainly:

> *You show us Rome was glorious, not profuse,*
> *And pompous buildings once were things of use.*
> *Yet shall, my lord, your just, your noble rules*
> *Fill half the land with imitating fools . . .*

The epithet hardly does justice to the talents of the Campbells, Wares, Leonis, and other architects who raised Corinthian colonnades in Surrey and opened airy Palladian windows in fog-ridden Kent, and who, Pope prophesied,

> *Shall call the winds through long arcades to roar,*
> *Proud to catch cold at a Venetian door.*

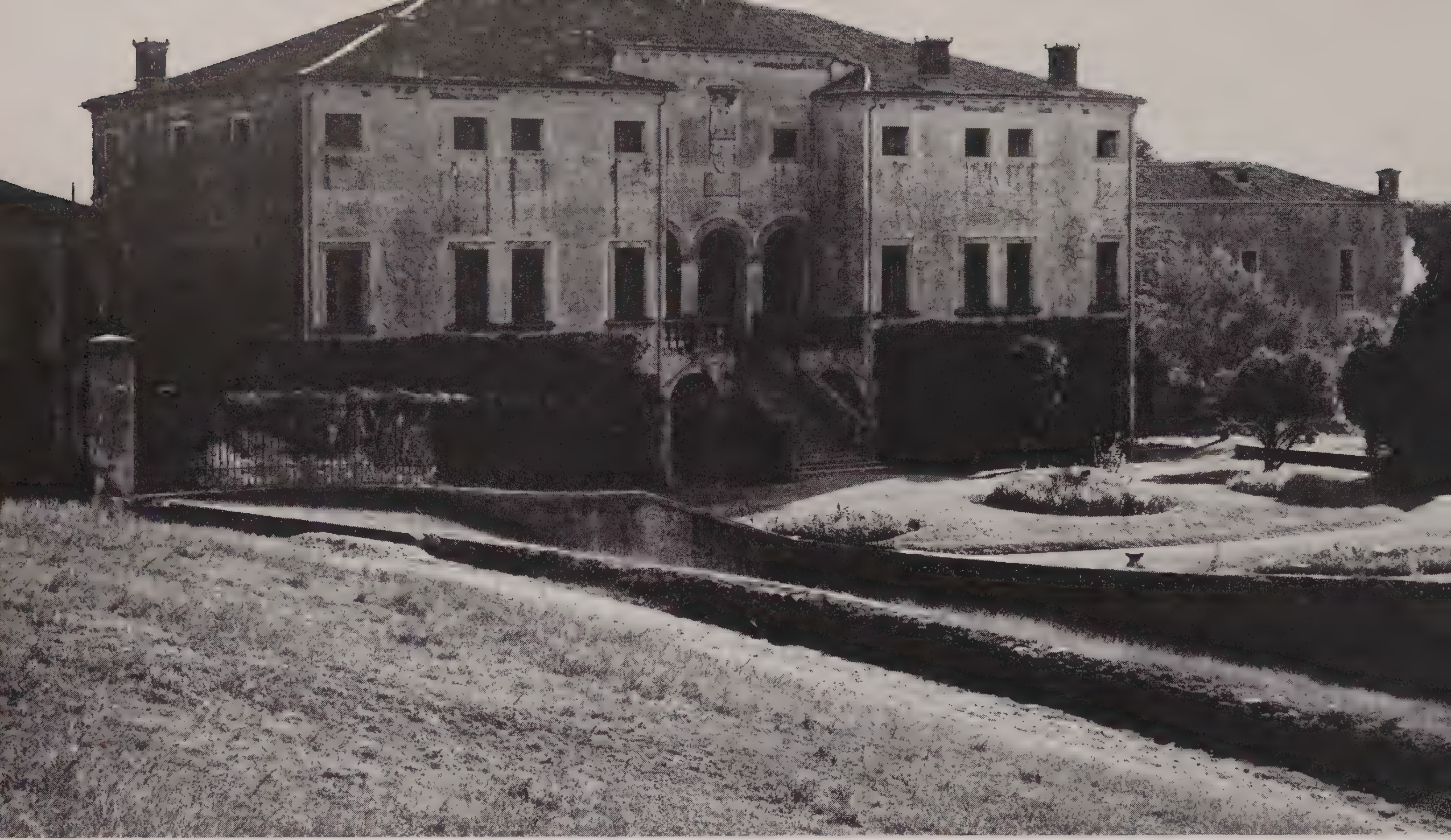
But eighteenth-century England, unlike France, extolled grandeur at the expense of comfort (an Italian connoisseur of the time, Count Algarotti, remarked that the ideal would be to live in a French house with a view of a Palladian one). One of the reasons why the British feel so drawn to Italy, one is tempted to think, is that it reminds them so much of home. The sight of the Villa Rotonda at Vicenza brings to mind memories of Mereworth Castle, Chiswick, or Tunbridge.

The British took Palladianism along wherever they went. It thus became rooted in Scotland and in Ireland. "I am decided on covering Ballyscullion with a mask of ivory stucco," Lord Bristol, Bishop of Cloyne and Derry, wrote to his son. "I shall follow, as always, dear Impeccable Palladio's rule . . ." And in the American colonies, from Portsmouth, New Hampshire, to Charleston, South Carolina, the style spread like a rash. Architects and builders versed in Palladianism were brought over from England; translations of Palladio's books and English adaptations of them were imported as necessary references for the gentleman's library—Washington's and Jefferson's among a host of others. The War of Independence did little or nothing to diminish the authority of those English publications. To this day, indeed, the Palladian idiom has served as a hallmark of elegance much in the way an English accent is regarded as a sign of distinction by Hollywood actors. Palladianism has thus imposed its forms on everything from the doors of iceboxes to the water tanks on top of skyscrapers.

What has made Palladianism so universal a phenomenon? Quatremère de Quincy states that "the style of Palladio has a propriety which must have facilitated its propagation." But appropriate to what? To the desire of the Renaissance and post-Renaissance world for an architecture that would combine the forms of antiquity with the functions of modern existence. Palladio was not only the first modern architect to graft the ancient temple front onto the "bourgeois" house, but also the first to teach others how to achieve the same result. He provided the world at large with an infallible method for learning to speak Latin, as it were, in ten easy lessons. Place your building on a high pedestal, tack a portico onto it, and crown the portico with a triangular pediment. To calculate your columns, refer to the proportions given in the book; and for your capitals, follow the five orders as shown in the figures.

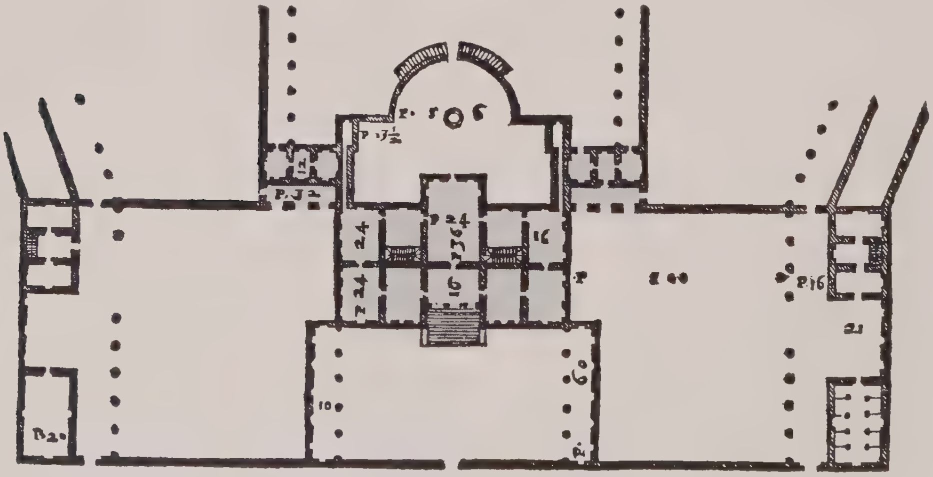
The formula is neat, easy to understand and to apply, and adaptable to every site, purpose, and budget. Like all glib formulas, however, Palladianism fosters monotony. To conjure up in a few words the crushing, colorless tedium exuding from so many constructions in this style is a task beyond the powers of the ordinary mortal, though not beyond those of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica.* "Palladian architecture," it says, "is characterized by symmetry, monumentality, and an academic use of classical form."

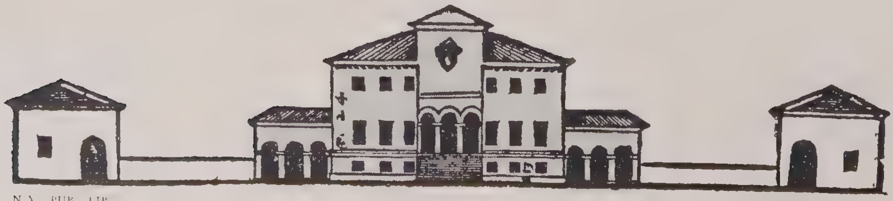
Palladian architecture is one thing; Palladio's own architecture, however, is quite another. There is an urgency about his villas, palaces, and churches. They appear real to a degree that buildings "based on" his designs rarely do. The reason for this is simple enough: Palladio's architecture is summarized, idealized, and departicularized in the plans and elevations of his great work, *The Four Books of Architecture* (*I quattro libri dell' architettura*). Palladian architecture, on the other hand, grows *out* of this treatise, made so efficient by the conciseness and clarity of its descriptions and its plates that it exercised tremendous influence. Every Palladian vogue coincides, not with reappraisals of the master's buildings, but with new editions of his words and drawings—witness, to mention but the most important, the publications sponsored by Lord Burlington in the eighteenth century and *Le Fabbriche e i disegni di Andrea Palladio* by the scholarly Bertotti-Scamozzi. But while the Palladians tended to follow sheepishly dear impeccable Palladio's rule, Palladio himself, most fortunately, did not. His actual buildings often differ markedly from the plates which he drew and published. His admirer Bertotti-Scamozzi mentions these discrepancies not without embarrassment. He explains them by the sloth and ignorance of masons and stonecutters who distorted the master's intentions. In fact, however, the designs in the *Quattro libri* are ex post facto idealizations, prepared statements for the press, poses struck for posterity. The difference between, say, Villa Godi-Porto and its printed elevation (published thirty years later) is that between a battle actually fought and the account of it in the generalissimo's memoirs. Place them side by side,



G. E. KIDDER SMITH

The Villa Godi-Porto, the earliest building credited to Palladio, does not show many features of his later, fully developed style, except for the absolute symmetry of the floor plan—a large central hall and four identical rooms on either side of it. The notable discrepancy between the way the house actually looks (above) and the floor plan and front elevation as drawn for his Four Books *(bottom) is the result of thirty years of afterthoughts. When the time came to publish this early work, he redrew the villa to bring it more in line with his mature style.*





N.Y. PUB. LIB.

and you have the exact measure of the distance separating pat simulation from living reality—and Palladianism, as it came to be known in the eighteenth century, from Palladio's actual constructions.

The explanation of both Palladio's greatness and his influence is to be found in his solution for the bizarre and colossal task which the Renaissance had set itself: to resurrect—and not merely to restore—antiquity.

Palladio was born in Padua on November 30, 1508. Palladio? We are not to hear of this name until some thirty years later. The early legal documents concerning him speak, with the terseness reserved for those of modest rank, of "Andrea, son of a certain Pietro." The latter, a miller, was nicknamed "dalla Gondola"; about Andrea's mother we know only that she had a limp. At the age of thirteen he was placed as an apprentice in the workshop of Bartolommeo Cavazza, to learn the trade of stonecutter-sculptor (the two activities were not easy to distinguish at the lower echelon). Three years later he ran away to nearby Vicenza, was forced to return, and fled again to Vicenza a year after. It is probably the first indication of that "natural inclination" which, he wrote later, "drove me since my young age toward the study of architecture." For, as he explains, Vicenza was "a city of mediocre extent, but full of fine minds and rich. . . . One may see there a number of buildings raised at the expense of a great many gentlemen who are much attached to this Art."

In Vicenza Andrea joined the masons and stonecutters guild and entered the employ of Giovanni da Porlezza, a thriving local contractor. One of the latter's jobs was to tend the municipal hall known as the Basilica. Raised a hundred years before, it was threatening to collapse, and the leading architects of the time were called in to suggest plans for its renovation. Sansovino, Serlio, Sanmicheli, and Giulio Romano came, counseled, and went, no doubt leaving their mark on young Andrea's receptive mind. One wonders, however, if he would ever have emerged from the rank and file of artisans had he not, about 1536, been hired to take part in the reconstruction of a villa owned by Giangiorgio Trissino.

Trissino was a superb specimen of that Renaissance breed, the humanist. This calling implied a learned interest in a staggering variety of disciplines. In Trissino's case they included not only literature and history, but also military science, mathematics, and architecture. In the Quattrocento and Cinquecento such many-sidedness, far from betokening dilettantism, betrayed the boundless authority of the classics, for the books left by the ancients (by now translated and annotated) were the common fount from which all the rivers of knowledge radiated. Such knowledge Trissino wished to impart to the sons of Vicenza's noble families, and to this end he had decided to "antiquate" his traditional villa at nearby Cricoli, that it might provide a proper setting for his academy.

And here his attention was caught by the twenty-eight-year-old Andrea. He took him into his service, taught him Latin, mathematics, and military science, and acquainted him with the Renaissance architect's Bible: the writings of Vitruvius. In Trissino's company or in that of his fellow students, Count Marco Thiene (for whom he was later to design a villa) and Giambattista Maganza (who was to paint the frescoes of several of his buildings), Andrea visited Rome at least three times between 1541 and 1547. The Eternal City came to him as a shattering revelation. He sketched and measured whatever Roman remnants he could find, assembling a body of information that furnished the substance of his *Antiquities of Rome* and of certain sections, published or left incomplete, of the *Quattro libri*. Within a few years, he had made such progress that one of Venice's most learned patricians, the illustrious Daniele Barbaro, patriarch of Aquileia, asked him for his advice when editing Vitruvius. As a monk receives a new name when he has completed his novitiate, Trissino baptized Andrea "Palladio"—the name which, in his epic *Italy Liberated from the Goths*, he had given to Belisarius's guardian angel. Andrea Palladio was to rid Italy of Gothic or, as Trissino termed it, "Teutonic" architecture—although, in his opinion, it "should be called confusion, not architecture."

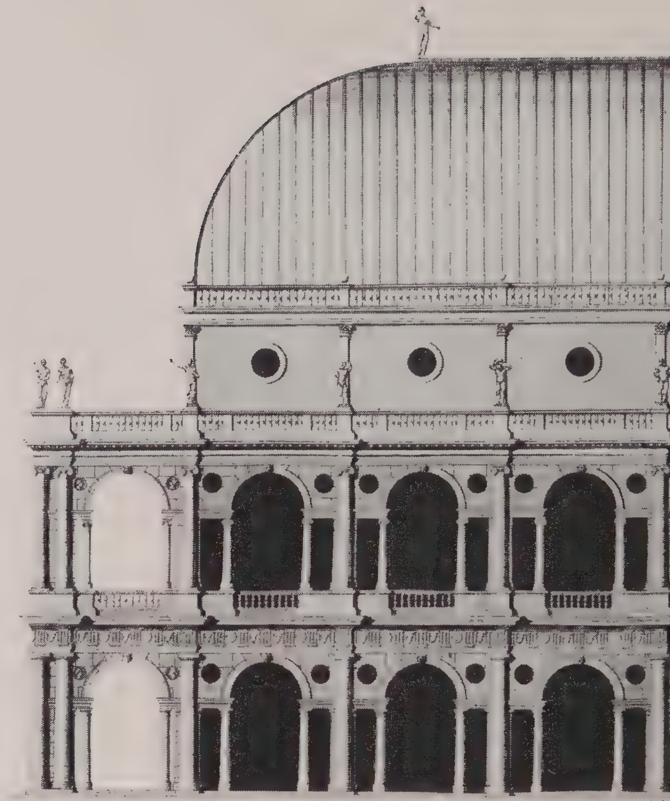
And now Palladio's career as an architect began. His first patrons were recruited among the nobility of Vicenza, whose sons he had met at Trissino's academy (Villa Godi-Porto, his first known effort, is dated 1540). Trissino lived just long enough to see his protégé's consecration: in 1549 Palladio's project for restoring the Basilica was adopted in preference to those of Sanmicheli and Giulio Romano. From then on, his fame grew by leaps and bounds. Commissions for villas, palaces, and bridges called him to Udine, Feltre, Verona, Brescia, and eventually to Venice, for whose wealthy patricians he built country houses along the river Brenta. So great by now was his reputation that he refused an invitation from the emperor Maximilian II to come to Vienna, explaining that he was too busy around Venice and Vicenza. In 1570 Sansovino died and Palladio succeeded him as Venice's chief architectural consultant. For Venice he built churches, made suggestions for restoring a portion of the Doges' Palace badly damaged by fire, and for a new bridge at the Rialto, and staged official festivities such as the reception of Henri III, king of France.

Though described by a contemporary as "*architetto vicentino famosissimo,*" he displayed to the very end the modesty and simplicity of his humble beginnings. Architecture, for him, was a calling rather than a profession. His friend Maganza calls him "*il puover barba Andrea,*" and he died intestate—probably because he owned nothing worth bequeathing. Rather small of build but of handsome appearance and jovial, the Palladio of those glorious, busy years has been depicted by his disciple and biographer, Paolo Gualdo, as follows: "He was most delightful in conversation and most humorous, so that he gave extreme contentment to the Gentlemen and Lords with whom he dealt, as well as to the workers whom he employed, entertaining them with many pleasantries, so that they worked most cheerfully. He greatly enjoyed teaching them with much solicitude all the proper terms of Art, so that there was not one mason, stonecutter, or carpenter around him who did not know all the measurements, components, and exact terms of Architecture."

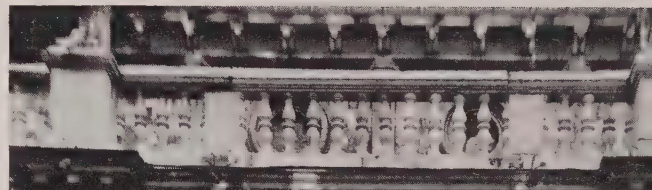
I have said nothing so far about Palladio's family—an omission that is not surprising, for he himself almost never mentions his wife and his four children, whom with true classical zeal he had named Silla, Leonida, Orazio, and Zenobia. Still, when Leonida and Orazio both died prematurely and in quick succession, he tells us of his grief in presenting his edition of Caesar's *Commentaries*, for which the children had executed drawings and which he published to honor their memory.

Military science was one of the facets of the humanistic training he received from Trissino that he sought to provide for his sons. For humanism remained his constant inspiration; of all the honors that were heaped upon him, undoubtedly none touched him more than his membership in the Accademia Olimpica, Vicenza's learned society. When the Academy decided to build a permanent theater to produce classical plays, it was naturally Palladio who was entrusted with its execution. He may well have regarded "this blessed theatre, in which I have made penitence for all the sins that I have committed or shall commit," as the crowning achievement of his life, for it afforded him the opportunity of conjuring up antiquity with the greatest fidelity. It was while working on the Teatro Olimpico that, on August 19, 1580, he died, "to the grief not only of the academicians," as a chronicler of the day put it, "but of the whole city."

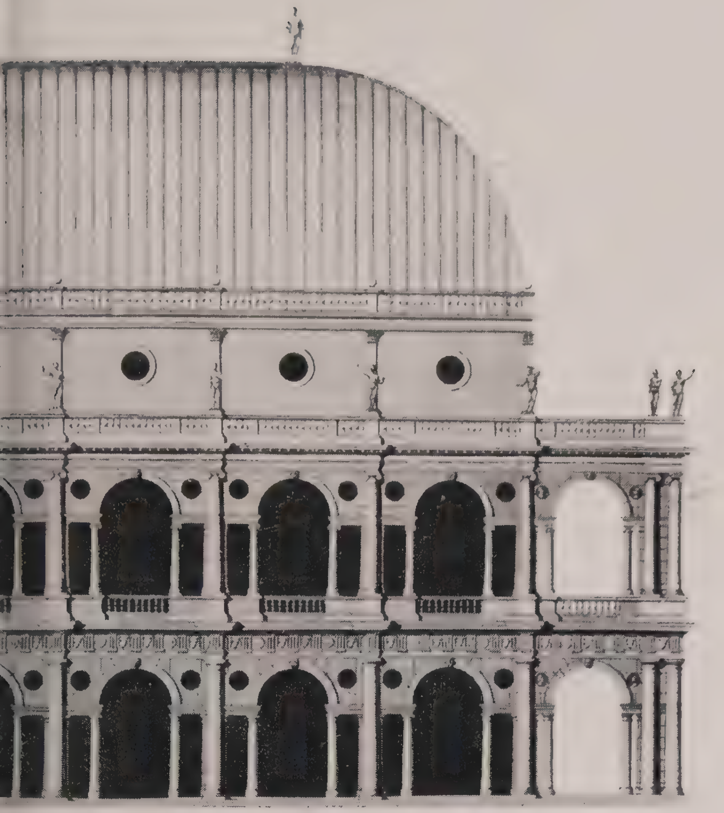
From "Andrea, son of a certain Pietro" to *nobilissimo* Palladio, from humble stonecutter to "the greatest architect since the age of Augustus"—it was humanism that made this miracle possible by providing the key to antiquity, the model and inspiration of all the arts. Possession of this key brought not only cultural prestige but



N.Y. PUB. LIB.



ALL PHOTOGRAPHS EXCEPT WHERE OTHERWISE NOTED ARE FROM *Andrea Palladio* BY ROBERTO PANE (1961), COURTESY GIULIO EINAUDI EDITORE, TURIN



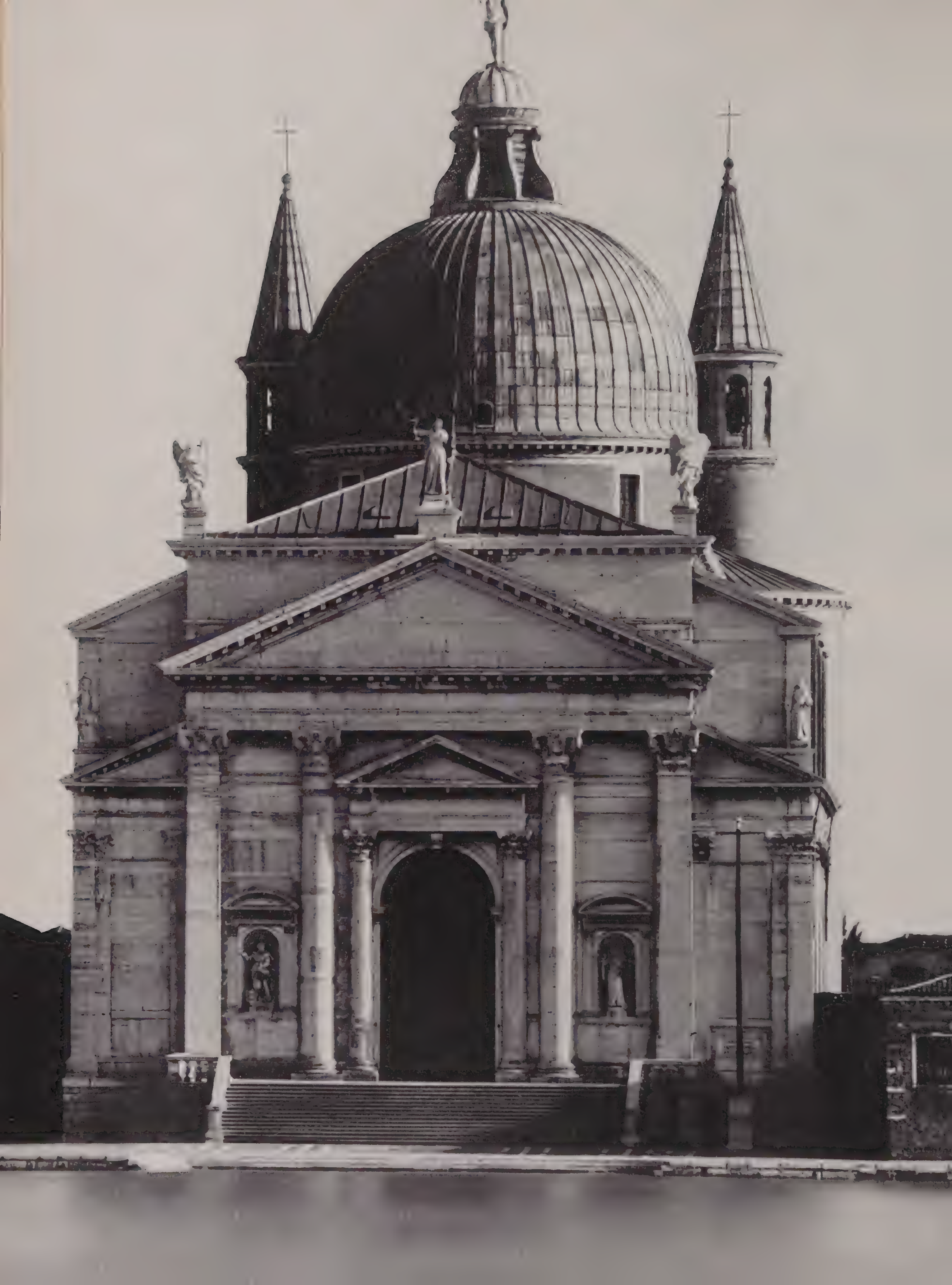
The work that first brought Palladio fame was his renovation of the Basilica, or municipal hall, in Vicenza. To the basically medieval structure (it was built in 1444) he added the famous double loggia that held the collapsing building together and totally altered its appearance (above). Here, for the first time, he used what has since come to be known as the "Palladian motif"—a tall central arch flanked by smaller rectangular openings (opposite). His English disciples adapted it to the well-known and omnipresent "Palladian window."

social dignity. Palladio's career simply illustrates a fundamental Renaissance process.

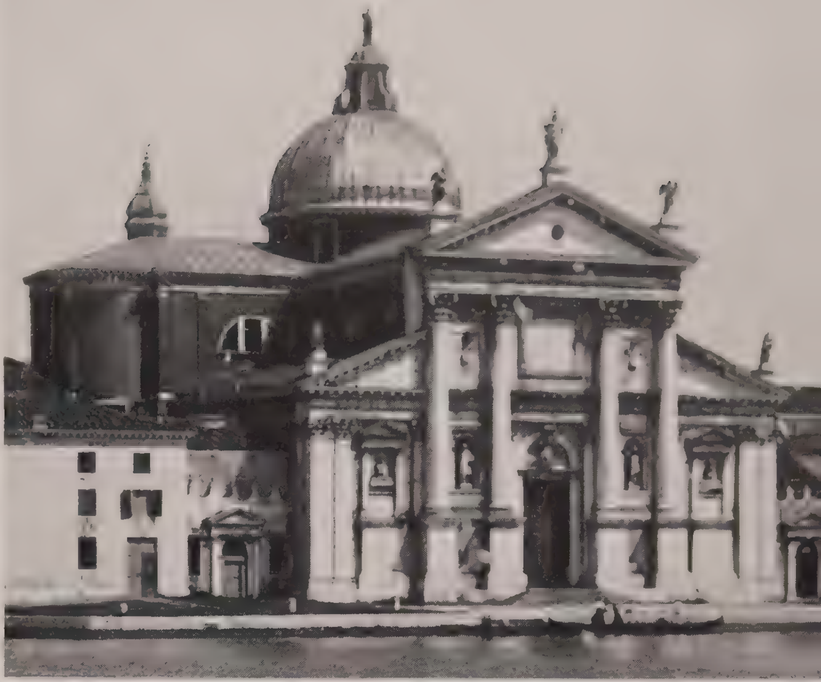
Basically, the medieval architect could not be dissociated from the masons and stonecutters whom he directed: he was, in the strictest sense, a foreman. It was the Renaissance that introduced a clear differentiation between labor and invention. The distinction is proudly emphasized by the great fifteenth-century Florentine architect Leon Battista Alberti: "For it is not a Carpenter or a Joiner that I thus rank with the greatest Masters in other Sciences; the manual Operator being no more than an Instrument to the Architect. Him I call an Architect, who, by sure and wonder Art and Method, is able, both with Thought and Invention, to devise, and with Execution, to compleat all those Works." Alberti also defines the prerequisites for being an architect in the new sense: "he must have a thorough Insight into the noblest and most curious Sciences." Alberti himself was accomplished enough as a Latinist to write a pastiche of an ancient fable that fooled the scholars. When the Laocoön group was unearthed, it was another Florentine architect, Giuliano da Sangallo, who identified it on the basis of a description in Pliny. But the illustrations of the architect's promotion from the status of manual worker to that of intellectual, as we would say today, are countless.

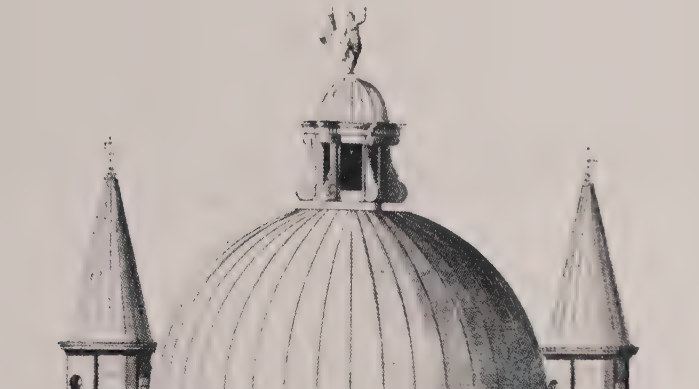
The values of humanism were no less enthusiastically adopted by Italy's new ruling class. For these newcomers, risen from anonymity by dint of their strength, cunning, or wealth, culture replaced a pedigree as the source and proof of legitimate standing. In a fluctuating world where the medieval hierarchies were crumbling, the classics now stood as the touchstone of reliability, stability, and permanence. Thus did the Viscontis, Sforzas, and Medicis not only surround themselves with humanists but frequently become humanists themselves. Naturally, they were connoisseurs of architecture; indeed, it sometimes seemed that the more unstable their rule, the stronger was their urge to build, as if to counterbalance the inconstancy of fortune with the durability of monuments.

Dignity and eternity, desperately desired by a time that could not or would not build on its own immediate past, were regarded as the prerogatives of antiquity. Rome, the mythical ancestor, replaced the shaky or altogether absent historical family tree. But the ancient masterpieces that served as models and stimuli to the Renaissance were primarily books. Architecture is no exception. The book, here, was Vitruvius, "my sole master and guide," as Palladio called him. Vitruvius was a rather confused and retrograde theoretician, and his *Ten Books on Architecture* was written in the first century B.C., when Roman classicism was already past its prime. (It was as though we had to judge the genius of Shakespeare on the sole evidence of *Titus Andronicus.*) Men like Alberti and



The working out of a solution to Palladio's essential problem, which was to reconcile his image of antiquity with contemporary reality, is best illustrated in three of his Venetian churches (two are shown here). The distinguished American critic Rudolf Wittkower describes these churches as being "an interpenetration of two temple fronts, a low, broad one which has been intersected by a high and monumental one." At San Giorgio Maggiore (right) there is still a problem: the columns supporting the frontal pediment of a Roman temple would have been too tall, so they are set on high pedestals—and the compromise does not quite work. But with Il Redentore (opposite, and cross section below), the architect achieved a façade that—if not classical—is an effective composition of interlocking triangles.



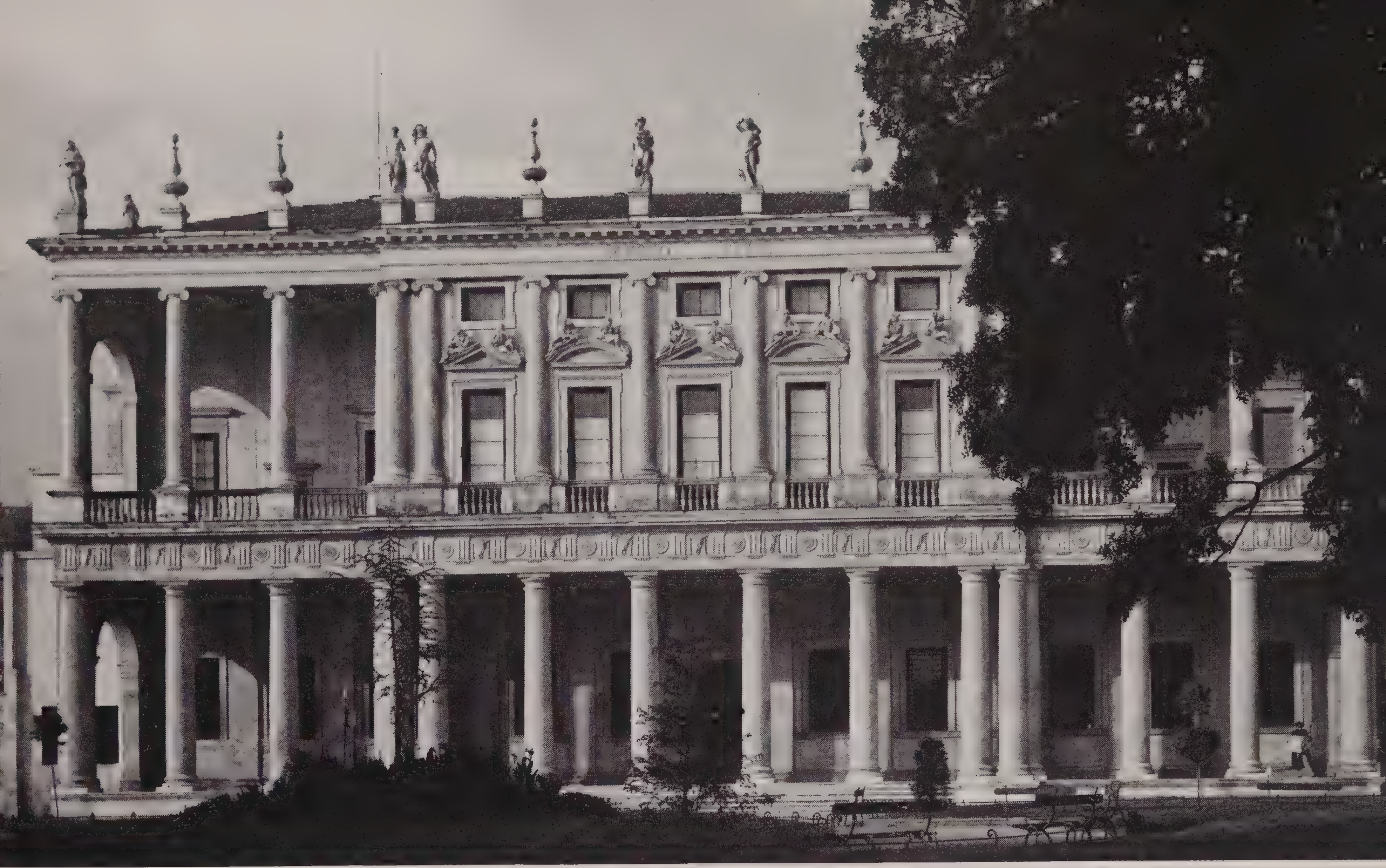


N.Y. PUB. LIB.

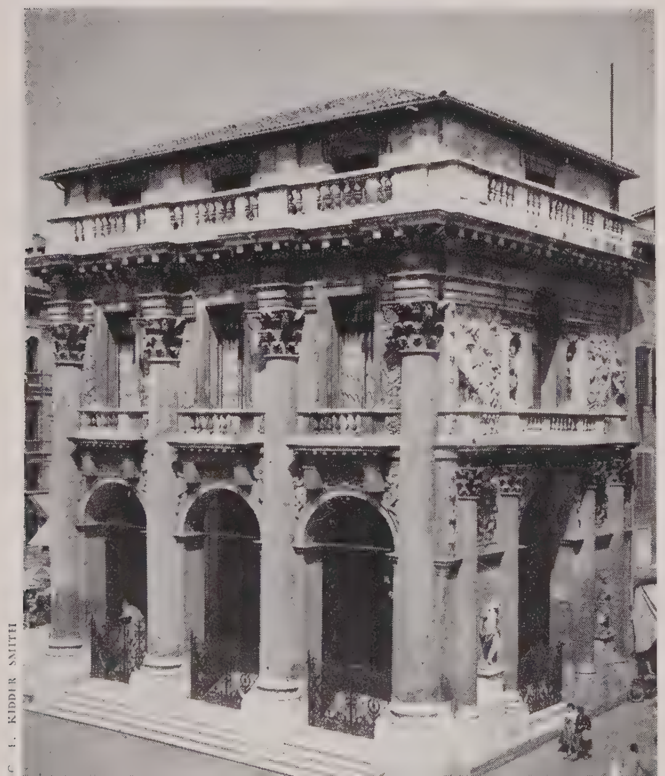
Palladio knew this; yet they turned to Vitruvius as an authority because his book, though mediocre, was the only one on architecture surviving from antiquity.

Still, not even the best book would have solved the problem—a problem which some of the other arts, owing to their nature, did not have to face. Adapting ancient mythology to contemporary literature, for instance, was relatively easy; the passing of time hardly disturbs the world of the shades. Buildings, on the other hand, are something concrete. And here, for the first time in the history of mankind, was an architecture that had not been produced by the political, economic, religious, social, and cultural conditions of the day and place, but had been lifted out of another age, so distant as to seem ideal. The discrepancy was so glaring that it must have struck everyone. In the contemporary setting, ancient architecture was bound to look fictitious, hence also factitious. Antiquity, hailed as *the* answer, thus turned out to be *the* problem. Although acclaimed as the very essence of reality and as the materialization of nature's laws, when applied by its advocates to contemporary purposes it turned into something that seemed illusory and artificial.

Not so at first, however. During the Florentine phase of the Renaissance the actual forms of antiquity mattered less than the principles which caused them to be beautiful. They were the principles of mathematics, or rather those proportions and ratios which, as Pythagoras had discovered two thousand years earlier, mathematics shared with musical harmony. Musical ratios determined the "ideal" proportions of height to width and length, of one unit to another and to the whole. Thus Alberti instructs the executant of one of his designs to respect exactly the dimensions he has given him, in order not to spoil "*tutta quella musica.*" Never was Schelling's definition of architecture as "frozen music" more eminently fitting. Proportion was even regarded as yet another



One of Palladio's most beautiful buildings is the Palazzo Chiericati in Vicenza, now the civic museum (as proclaimed by the awkwardly spaced words on the upper entablature). The lovely, open loggias are interrupted on the second floor by the insertion of a small but typical Renaissance palazzo *front, which reminds us that this is not a Roman basilica after all but a house to live in, however grandly. The most important building of Palladio's late style is the Loggia del Capitanio (below), also in Vicenza, which in its boldness and richness suggests the beginnings of the Baroque—not a return to the antique.*



G. E. KIDDER SMITH

manifestation of God. Fra Luca Pacioli, in an influential treatise, calls proportion "divine" and "sent from the heavens," and demonstrates this with arguments acceptable to the most orthodox theologian. Nor was divine proportion out of tune with Cinquecento conditions, for mathematics is timeless, stateless.

And that, in a way, was the trouble with such criteria. They remained too abstract, too intellectual. The rules could not be understood without telling examples. Those examples existed and were being unearthed with growing speed: the buildings of ancient Rome. They came to be viewed, one might say, as the historical incarnation of the Eternal Laws. But with the concrete exhumation of antiquity, the discrepancy between it and the modern setting became overt. And it is in his attitude toward this incongruity that Palladio manifests his true greatness.

The Basilica in Vicenza (pages 62–63), one of Palladio's earliest designs and the one that "made" him, shows with exemplary neatness the basic problem and the way, constant throughout his career, in which he chose to face it. Around the huge, gloomy, dilapidated two-story Gothic building, Palladio decided to wrap a majestic double loggia of white marble to serve both as screen and as buttress. So total was the contradiction between the two structures that we would have excused him for rendering it less manifest by obliterating the inner one from view. Instead, Palladio chose to connect the inner with the outer structure. But how? The medieval bays were spaced irregularly, while regular scansion was an indispensable part of the classical image. Palladio solved this problem by introducing the celebrated "Palladian motif" (actually derived from a drawing by Serlio), a tall central arch flanked by smaller rectangular apertures. Caught by the strong, regular accents of the arches and the great semi-columns between them, our attention neglects the unaccented fact that the smaller columns and pilasters defining the rectangular openings are set at varying intervals to match the irregularity of the Gothic bays.

Palladio's notion of perfection does not blind him to the facts of life. No Renaissance architect has provided sounder advice on what materials to use and how to keep costs down. He dreamed of porticoes, but he also conceived solutions that are masterpieces of engineering and practical sense. His designs for trussed bridges are centuries ahead of his time; he even invented a mechanism for drawing water from low places. He was an idealist, indeed, who accepted reality rather than ignore it, because the resulting conflict stimulated his creative powers and because he was confident that his ideal—antiquity—was strong enough to cope with any awkward problem.

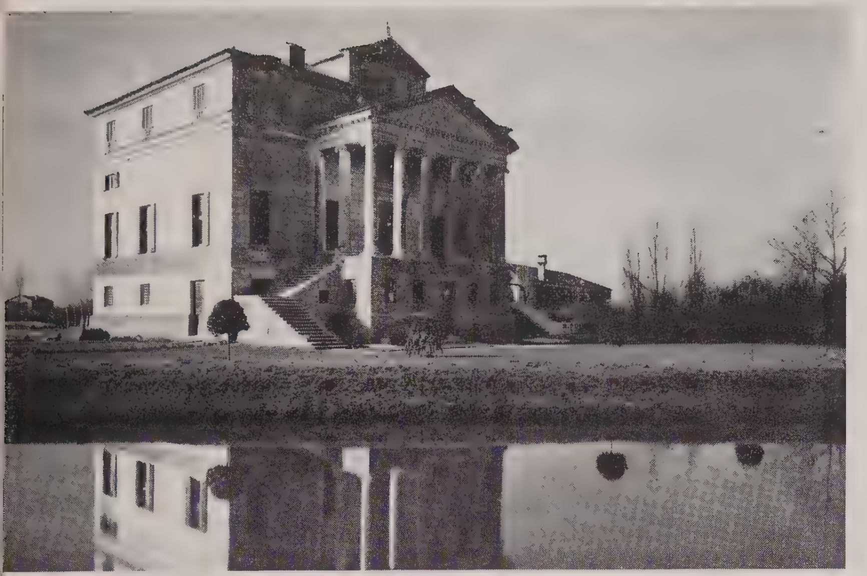
He therefore undertook to restate, as carefully as possible, current reality in ancient terms. The convent of the Carità in Venice is a translation, unit by unit, of the Roman house: *tablinum* has become sacristy; *oecus*, refectory; and so on. The traditional elements of the Italian villa—the entrance hall, or loggia, reception hall, and courtyard—are made to recall the ancient vestibulum, atrium, and peristyle. Through such restatement the raw material of modern construction acquired dignity and regularity. However, as they begin to stand for modern realities, the classical elements tend to lose their relation to one another, to become independent, to cease composing that total image which is precisely the prerogative of the Greek or Roman prototype. To save the image, Palladio must reconcile the terms with each other, render plausible, for instance, juxtapositions of disproportionate orders such as never occurred in antiquity; hence the tensions and excitement which, despite the conventionality of his ingredients, make Palladio's architecture unique.

Nowhere is the process more evident than in his Venetian churches San Francesco della Vigna (1562), San Giorgio Maggiore (1565), and Il Redentore (1577). The image which Palladio wants to impose on the church is, quite naturally, that of the ancient temple. The temple façade must therefore express the basilican shape of the Christian church as it did the pagan cella. But the basilica is not the cella: the latter is a rectangular box, the former has a high central nave and lower aisles at the sides. Palladio's initial solution is to express the nave by a central pedimented front, and the aisles by pediment segments leaning against the central one. This solution breaks and blurs the image of a temple.

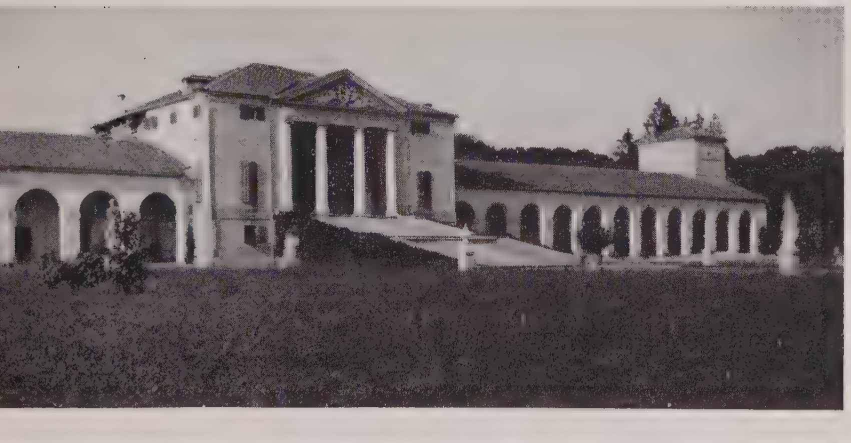
At San Giorgio (see page 65), Palladio clearly seeks to restore an integrated image. The truncated, flanking pediments are again used, but are connected visually by a cornice that weaves its way through the columns of the central temple. The columns must express the height and width of the nave, a necessity which makes them rather embarrassingly tall and close together. To alleviate this effect, Palladio cuts down the height of the columns by hoisting them on pedestals. But now, like orthopedic shoes, they attract attention to the malformation which they seek to correct, all the more since these high heels must be harmonized with the two pairs of terminal pilasters—which wear normal shoes, so to speak. Palladio manages the transition by placing between them *aediculae*, or niches, filled with statuary on pedestals of the same height as those sustaining the columns, but in shallower relief, so as to be in line with the terminal pilasters. This awkwardness, these abrupt transitions, caused by the conflict between classic image and the Christian tradition, are the very source of San Giorgio's power. Columns, pilasters, and cornices strain, bulge, and brace themselves like muscles under severe stress.

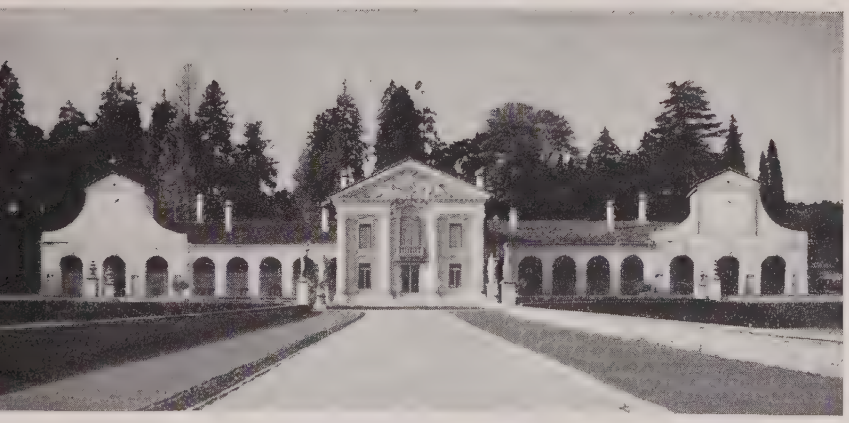
The façade of Il Redentore (pages 64, 65) presents a thoroughly unified image. Two columns flanked by two pilasters carry the central pediment; the pilasters are equal in height to the columns and identical in shape to the smaller pilasters supporting the pediment segments on either side, thus smoothing over the connection that had proved so troublesome in the design of San Giorgio. The other big difficulty, the awkward height of the columns, is solved by setting the central pediment underneath the cornice which, inside as well as outside, defines the upper limits of the walls of the nave in such a way that the tip of the triangle just touches the cornice instead of resting on it as at San Giorgio—a solution derived from the Pantheon. Il Redentore, as one approaches it from the canal of the Giudecca, presents a taut network of interlocking triangles coping in quick succession with the church's outward and upward expansion: it is like the successive attitudes of a wrestler parrying the attacks of a strong antagonist.

The conflict between antique form and modern function was most acute when Palladio attempted to impose the image of the classical temple on civil architecture, for while the church was a remote descendant of the Roman temple, the modern house was not. So deep is this contradiction that all Renaissance architects excepting Michelangelo (who deliberately used it for dramatic effect) and Palladio sought to soft-pedal it. In their palaces, Bramante, Raphael, and Mansart made decorative use of ancient fea-



Bleak and somewhat melancholy, Palladio's Villa Malcontenta (above) stands beside the Brenta—its current atmosphere in no way impaired by the apocryphal tale of a "discontented lady" confined within its walls. At the Villa Emo near Fanzolo (below), the broad, ceremonial stairway is replaced by a ramp that also serves as a threshing floor. Overtly less of a farmhouse is the Villa Barbaro at Maser (bottom), where the central block is said to have been modeled on the Temple of Fortuna Virilis at Rome. The arcaded wings on either side were intended to serve as granaries, storehouses, stables, and quarters for the caretaker.





tures but did not try to resurrect the image of which these elements originally were the components. Palladio, on the contrary, did. He increasingly discarded the pilaster, that polished compromise between column and wall, in favor of the column or, if need be, the half column. Clever adjustments, skillful attenuations, and rubato transitions between classic ideal and contemporary reality are rejected. Cornices do not taper off, but break off abruptly. At Villa Pisani, Villa Cornaro, and a dozen more, the features of the Roman temple are combined with the plain walls of a typical farmhouse—a juxtaposition as startling as the sight of the Chairman of the Board and the unskilled laborer leaving the factory arm in arm. Indeed, wherever ideal and reality are apt to interfere with each other, Palladio deliberately accentuates the hiatus between them: when the part of the façade that says "I am a modern house" and that which proclaims "I am an ancient temple" are in the same plane and therefore might rub off on each other, he often redoubles the columns or half columns at the border line between them or breaks off the cornice at the point where they meet. Such intransigence prevents the image of the temple from being shattered or diluted.

I have been using the term "image" rather than "structure" to forestall the inevitable twentieth-century objection: Palladio's use of antique features may be stricter, but it remains, as with the Palladians and the neoclassicists, superficial, grafted on, decorative. And is not the battleground between ancient and modern architecture the façade? The postulate of the moderns is that no element of a building means anything unless it is physically active (carries, holds together, or suspends). Seen in this perspective, a façade becomes meaningless unless it outlines, so to speak, the internal structure of the building. As a particular taste, this notion need not be argued with; as a statement of an architectural truth, however, it is no more indisputable than would be the contention that our skin must reflect our organs and our skeleton.

There *is* a difference between a façade by Palladio and one by an eighteenth-century "Palladian," a difference resulting from the spiritual density lent by Palladio to his classical features. If his half columns *feel* like full columns ensconced in the wall, it is because they substantiate his ideal image. And in fact that ideal does affect and alter reality. The pediment squeezes an incongruous deformation into the traditional, plain, flat, tiled roof of the Italian farmhouse. Bullied by the temple image, the kitchen, storage rooms, and servants' quarters retreat into half-hidden attics and ground floors disguised as stylobates. Conversely, the original classical image is strained, even distorted, by its contact with reality. The double colonnade of the Palazzo Chiericati (see page 66) is the very model of a Roman basilica—or would be, had the shape, features, and functions of a late Renaissance palace not been poured or pressed into the central section of the upper loggia. The half columns on this portion of the façade have no structural role, yet they seem almost to burst under the pressure of the wall between them (hence that air of imperiled power so characteristic of Palladio's colonnades). And as if to underscore that impression, he has doubled up the columns at either end of the little second-story "palace." How much Palladio wanted his appended columns to *look* as if they carried weight is shown in a late work, the Loggia del Capitanio in Vicenza (also on page 66). The wall space between the half columns is filled with a proliferation of stucco decoration, attributed by some to a Baroque *horror vacui*. In my opinion these stucco undulations serve to make the wall seem light and fragile, too soft to carry great weight, and thus by contrast to enhance the apparent strength of the semi-columns—thereby reinforcing the classical image.

Despite the distortions and the limitations thus provoked, Palladio, unlike the neoclassicists, deliberately exposed his ideal image to the test of reality. Grandness of design almost always went hand in hand with modesty of budget; eternal forms were executed in the most perishable materials, such as brick and stucco.

It was the villa that provided Palladio with the sharpest case of dualism, of divergent requirements and aspirations. The late Middle Ages had chastised nature by walling it out; the Renaissance worshiped it. The villa is the expression of the city man's return to the country. Nowhere did it achieve a more complex and perfect development than around Venice. The "*Serenissima Repubblica*," grown rich and powerful on the sea, now yearned for the land. It encouraged its patricians to establish pleasant country residences—not warlike castles that might induce them to overthrow the authorities. "*Ville, sì; castelli, no*" was the Republic's policy. Villas thus began to line the winding course of the river Brenta and to stud the provinces under Venice's control. Here, nobles of Venice, Vicenza, and Padua fled the heat of summer, presaging the modern holiday exodus: *villeggiatura*, the Italians' word for vacationing, comes from *villa*. What was villa life like? More than a thousand years before, the poet Martial had described it thus:

You tell me, Friend, you much desire to know
What in my Villa I can find to do?
I eat, drink, play, bathe, sleep, eat again
Or read, or wanton in the Muses' Train.

The program was still much the same in the Renaissance. Palladio's patrons, the brothers Barbaro or Thiene, adhered to a similar creed of humanistic leisure, rounding it out with walks, concerts, conversations, hunting, and so on. Although the lords of Venice and Vicenza did not do all their wantoning in the Muses' train, frivolity was a less conspicuous part of their activities than it would have been in the eighteenth century. But the villas of the Veneto also served another end: they were farms, the vital centers of large domains which drainage had reclaimed from the insalubrious marshes. How great a part this utilitarian function played in villa life was proved in the nineteenth century, when the decay of agriculture helped to spell ruin for the villas as vacation residences.

Palladio was fully aware of the villa's dual role. The frescoes which decorated their *sale grande* show noble lords and ladies entertaining, flirting, playing cards or lutes, eating, and admiring the landscape, but there are also allegories representing Economy and Ceres, the goddess of harvests, with farm implements in her hands and ears of corn in her hair.

In the frescoes of Villa Emo, Economy is companion to Cordiality: base utility is the foundation of even the highest pleasure. The grand, paved approach at Villa Emo (see opposite) is not only a ramplike esplanade but a threshing floor. As he accepts this dualism of function, so Palladio does not reject the basic form of the farm or villa traditional to the Veneto, a form derived from the defensive *castello*, a central cube flanked by towers. Far from playing down this fact, Palladio accentuates it by setting off classical ornament against rustic plainness, void against solid, relief against smoothness.

Indeed, he underscores the dualism in still another way. Everything that concerns the function of humanistic leisure is not only concentrated in the middle of the villa but given an upward thrust. Elevation, in every sense of the word, marks Palladio's use of antiquity. Whenever possible, Palladio raises the villa on a steep pedestal, emphasizes the height (and haughtiness) of his porticoes at the expense of width, and minimizes horizontal motifs that would slow down the upward surge. In the *sala grande*, the vestibule, the atrium, and the other plain cubic rooms which compose that part of the house, height, one feels, comes first; length and width follow as best they can—not always comfortably. Today, the masters of these villas have often retreated into the meaner quarters reserved for servants in Palladio's time. Not that he despised or neglected convenience, but the word did not have in the Renaissance the same meaning that it does nowadays; comfort to the spirit outweighed other considerations.

On the other hand, the practical functions of the villa are not only concentrated in the wings, but they tend to push them out horizontally. The colonnades which extend like wide-open arms on the sides of villas Barbaro, Emo, and Badoer hide the kitchen, storage rooms, servants' rooms, and so on. A fierce tug of war develops between the horizontal sector, reserved for modern utility, and the vertical sector, assigned to antiquity and nobility. At Malcontenta in its present state, the vertical is all that is left: the stiff, tall, gray villa looks like a charging old elephant (see page 68). A unique equilibrium is found at the Rotonda (see page 58): central axis and sides, vertical and horizontal, temple and castello, are so evenly balanced that the Rotonda can be read either as a castello bisected by a double temple or as a double temple with four vestigial castello towers fitted into the corners.

Elsewhere, however, no contamination between the conflicting sectors is allowed. That Palladio wanted them separate is shown by the fact that he provided a minimum of communication between them. Palladio dislikes stairs, those internal transitions between levels, and in most of his villas the staircases are grotesquely underdeveloped considering the grandness of the other parts. When you are in the vertical part of the villa, the owner of one told me, you are completely cut off from, and unaware of, the activities going on in the horizontal sector, and vice versa. Yet despite their abrupt opposition, the terms of the dualism are connected, related by Palladio's extraordinary sense of proportion—a sense obviously innate but attributed by him to the observance of musical—that is, mathematical—ratios. Independent from each other, temple and castello are brought into harmony by their subservience to the same invisible law of proportion.

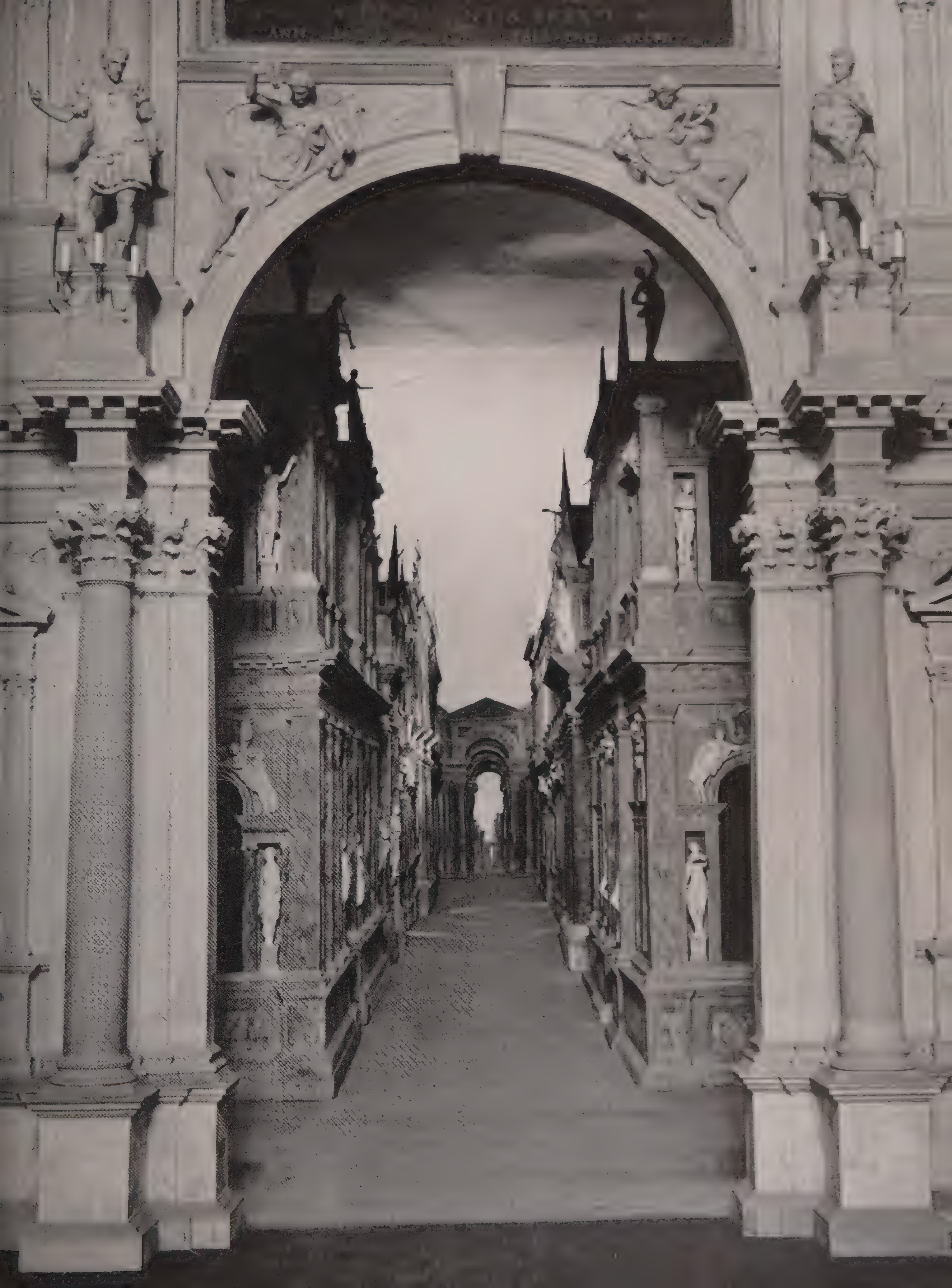
Reality—that is to say, local architectural tradition, existing building practice, and contemporary utility—submits Palladio's classical ideal to pressures and tensions so extreme that they threaten to distort it, mutilate it, or even to make it explode. Why did Palladio take—indeed, invite—the risk? Was he not bent above all on the complete revival of antiquity? Precisely: it would not be complete unless it also possessed a quality so evident in the ancient buildings which have come down to us—that of feeling real. Latin suddenly ceases being a dead language because Palladio speaks it with a Vicentine accent. Seeming flaws and shortcomings are actually life-giving. The damage inflicted on Palladio's temple by practical, contemporary conditions paradoxically lends it authenticity, as the havoc inflicted by time enhances the presence of ancient ruins. His palaces and villas have often lost their coating of beautiful stucco, laying bare the plebeian brick beneath, yet have gained in grandeur thereby. Modern function and form play the same role as these accidental mutilations. Real considerations destroy part of the ideal image but also transfuse part of their lifeblood into the latter's empty veins. What differentiates Palladio from the Palladians is his ultimate recognition that antiquity could only be resurrected partially.

Palladio's last work was the Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza, built to the pattern of the ancient Roman theatre. Its most important feature is the permanent stage-set, an elaborate screen of three arches opening onto long vistas of a Renaissance city. The central one (opposite) is a triumph of trompe l'oeil: *this seemingly endless street is actually only twenty feet long. Here, where all the devices of theatrical illusion come into play, the Baroque age is at hand.*

Complete presentation of the classical image leads not to vivid resurrection, but to academic historical reconstruction. Palladio's last buildings are proof of this fatality. The little church (Tempietto) at Maser dates from the last year of his life. In plan it is closely modeled on the centralized, circular Roman temple—in particular, the Pantheon. In the niches statues of New Testament figures have stepped into the sandals of ancient divinities. So complete is the illusion that a prayer could easily begin as a plea to Christ and end as an invocation to Jupiter. But it *is* an illusion. A complete statement of antiquity must necessarily be theoretical or theatrical—either drawings in a treatise or stage-sets.

The former are to be found in Palladio's *Four Books;* the latter, in a building undertaken near the end of his life and completed after his death by his disciple Vicenzo Scamozzi—the Teatro Olimpico (opposite). Created for the performance of ancient drama and Renaissance imitations thereof, the Olympic Theatre is at once Palladio's fullest evocation of antiquity and the most unreal: a humanist mirage of plaster and wood. Illusion, here, goes over into illusionism. *Trompe l'oeil*, false perspectives—in short, all the devices favored by the Baroque—come into play. Indeed, the Baroque may be said to begin here, for it can be defined as the decision to turn the theatricality and unreality of the classic revival, suppressed by Palladio at such heavy cost, into an instrument for demonstrating that life is a dream, all the world a stage, man the victim of illusion, and that the only solid ground is God. Between the Florentine age of innocence and the Baroque age of anxiety, Palladio stands as the greatest figure of the age of experience.

Pierre Schneider lives in Paris and writes about art and architecture for both French and American periodicals. His most recent article for Horizon *was "The Well-Loved River" (the Seine) in the issue of July, 1962.*



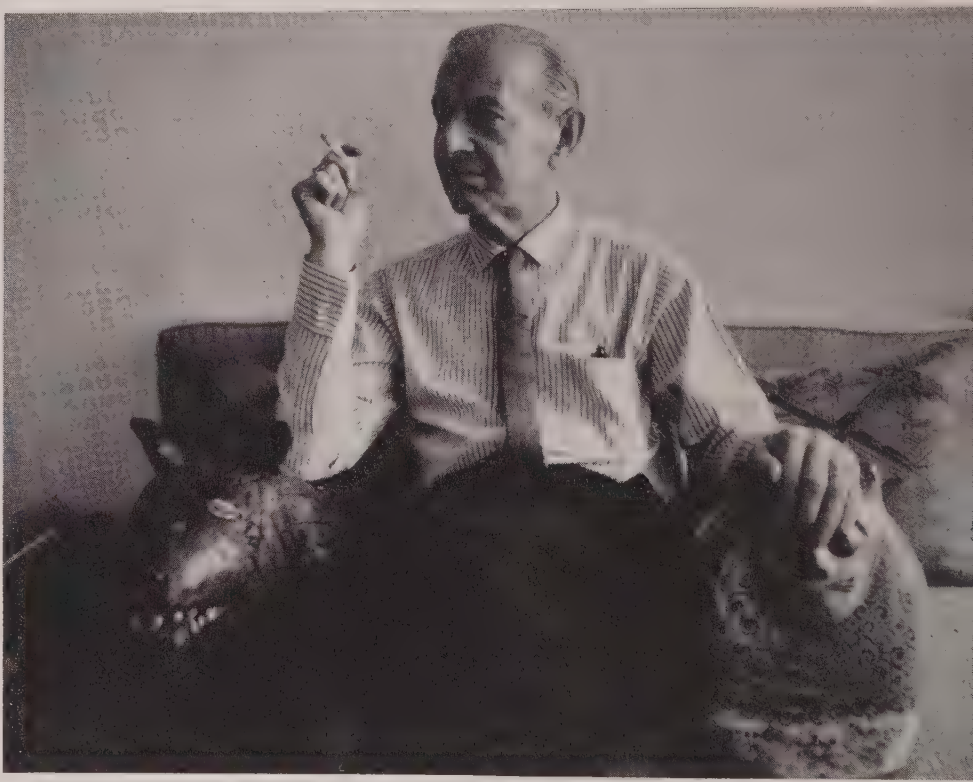
Consider a carved wooden lion out of a nineteenth-century Noah's ark; a Mexican pottery piggy bank; a spangled decoration from an Indian village street-fair. The lion and the piggy bank used to be found only in the nursery, while those spangled ornaments were rarely seen outside India. But increasingly since World War II, folk-art objects and certain toys have become collectors' items. A late Victorian dollhouse, for example, with a wooden stoop, and lace curtains painted at the windows, which not long ago would have been collected only by the Salvation Army, may now fetch three figures. Customs officers, when poking through the baggage of returning tourists, have learned to take in their stride such things as Thai shadow puppets, or tin votive symbols from Greece, or Nigerian fly whisks.

For many this is a passing vogue, but for Alexander Girard, the architect and designer, who may, indeed, be partly responsible for the vogue, it is a lifetime interest and serious pursuit. He began as a young man, in the late 1930's, to collect toys and folk art. Primitive painting was coming into style then, but primitive or naïve objects were for the most part still being relegated either to the careless hands of children or to ethnic collections in natural history museums.

Over the years, and as a pleasurable adjunct to many business trips abroad, Girard kept adding to his collection, and now has more than fifty thousand objects. In their house in Santa Fe he and his wife have several display areas and enjoy a frequent change of exhibit. However, there is not enough room to show the bulk of the treasure, and it is kept in a specially built storehouse in the garden. In 1960 Mr. and Mrs. Girard established a foundation to care for their collection. Under its auspices special exhibitions are sometimes sent out to museums.

Although the objects in the Girard collection come from many times and from nearly every part of the world, they have these things in common: they are "unsophisticated or naïve in character; ingenious in concept; direct in expression; sincere in creation; bounded by the vigorous limitation of a tool, a material, a handcraft, or a machine process." These are Girard's own words, and he adds that it is difficult to find the right words. Perhaps all the things in the collection might be called unconscious art, to distinguish them from art objects that are consciously planned and technically flawless—a Fabergé Easter egg, for example, or the Shah of Persia's peacock throne. The quality that distinguishes a piece of art from a piece of junk can, of course, be present or absent in either category.

Why does naïve and artless art have so wide an attraction nowadays? An obvious answer is that we are stifled by regimentation and surfeited with mere technical excellence. Each of Girard's many thousand objects seems gloriously individual. "I am I," it says firmly. Directness and lack of guile, in our complex age, are refreshing and reassuring.

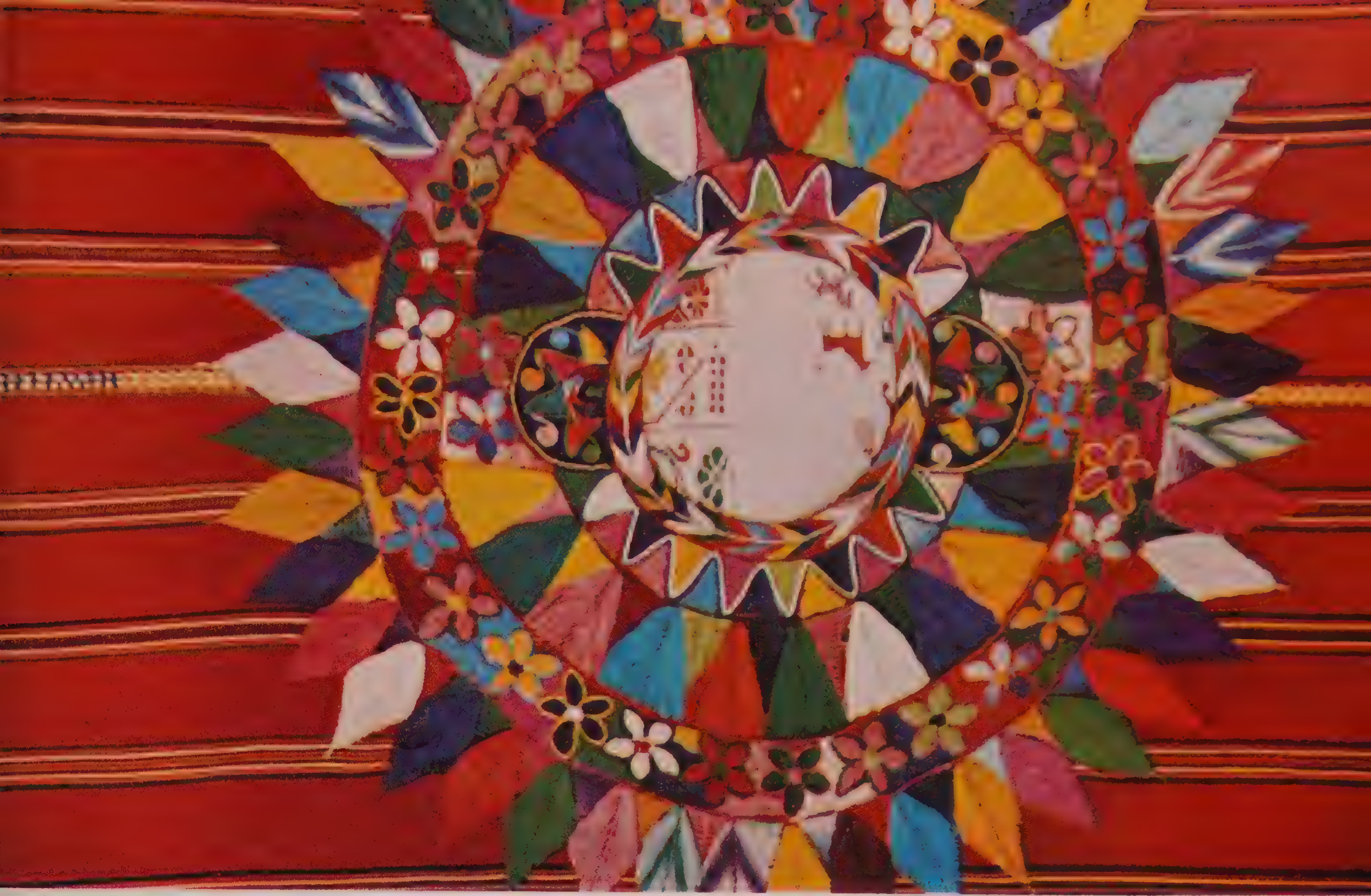


Alexander Girard flanked by a Polish wooden dog and a Mexican pottery cat

But regardless of whether such art is generally sought after, Girard thinks it important to have a repository for it, for it is growing scarce. The worth of government-sponsored programs to preserve traditional arts and crafts is dubious. Folk art is bound to die, in fact, is already dying, so that when a village craftsman is urged to turn out objects not destined for the use and pleasure of his own people but to be sold to passing strangers, the reason for making them becomes debased and so does the quality. However, as Girard says, that which is the artist in mankind does not die. In Italy, for example, there is virtually no more real folk art, but the skilled crafts are immensely satisfying and imaginative. The man who would once have been sitting at his village door carving nativity figures may now be a skilled technician. If luck is with him, perhaps he is designing beautiful lamps for a factory—or even operating a movie camera for Federico Fellini.

The scope of the Girard collection is vast. Besides those things mentioned above, it includes toy theatres, dolls, valentines, peasant embroideries, games, kites, festival decorations for holidays religious and secular, and all manner of religious and ceremonial objects, such as crèches, Mexican Day-of-the-Dead processions, Hopi kachina dolls, and prayer wheels; in fact, just about anything that has been made by an unsophisticated artist in order to please and to satisfy an instinct for the enjoyment of beauty.

On the following five pages, HORIZON reproduces a few examples from the Girard Foundation collection.



Embroidered collar from Guatemala

Artless Art

PHOTOGRAPHS BY [illegible]

Storeroom of the Girard Foundation collection

Papier-mâché mask from Venezuela

Chinese shadow puppet of phoenix

Pottery mermaid from Metepec, Mexico

Detail of appliquéd blouse, San Blas, Panama

xican mask of wood and rope

Detail of pottery candlestick, Metepec, Mexico

Wooden merry-go-round figure from India

tery figures from Tesuque pueblo, N.M.

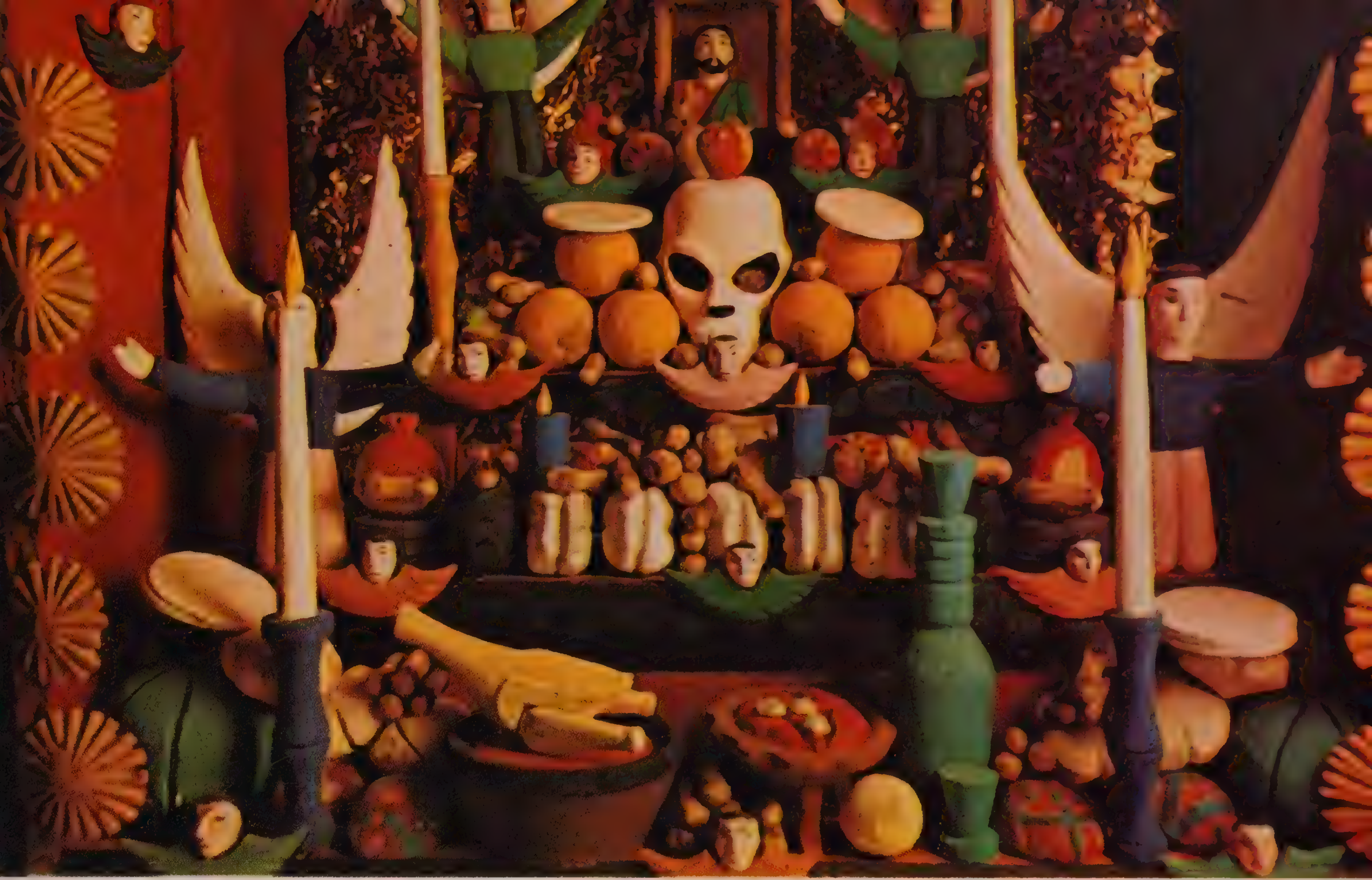
Horses and rider made of chicle, from Brazil

Balsa wood dolls from Panama

Wooden angel from Gujarat, India

Marble saint from Peru, tin frame from Mex

18th-century wax dolls from Central Europ



Offerings for the Day of the Dead, Oaxaca, Mexico

Rag dolls from Rajasthan, India

The Girards in embroidered costumes from Bolivia

FROM THE КАЗАЧОК TO THE TWIST

Minicars, synthetics, and the next-to-newest dance steps from the West—life is changing in the U.S.S.R. today, especially for the young. The question is: How much?

By RICHARD SYMONT

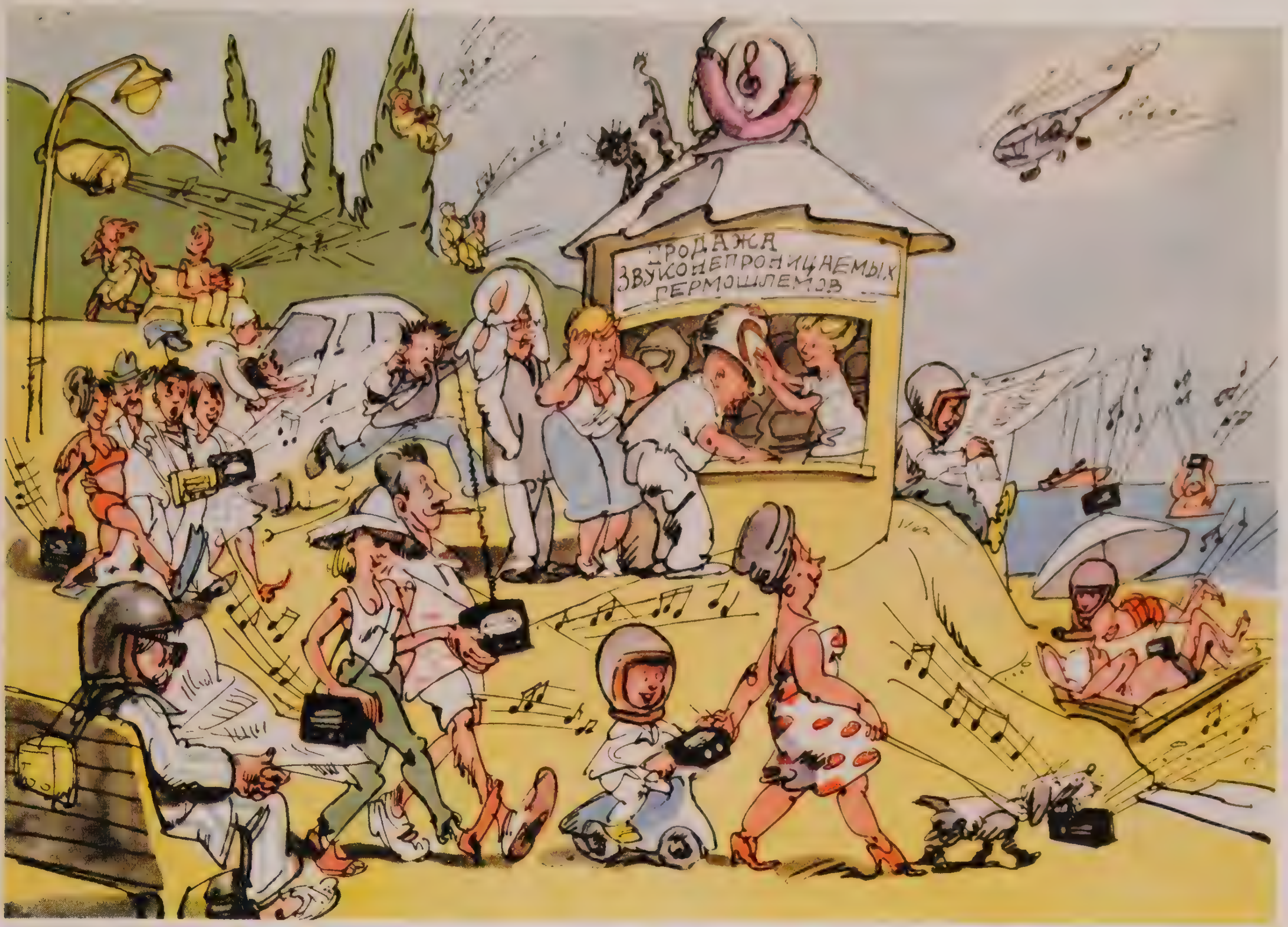
On my first Sunday in Russia we went out to swim at Serebryany Bor, the "Silver Grove," by the Moscow River—Sasha the unshaven, Michael the poet, Kolya in his blouse made out of an old plush tablecloth (he had no jacket), and Nina in the worn sneakers which were the only shoes she had.

I had bathing trunks but I was told to put them away, and we all undressed and ran across the sand in nothing at all, Nina a few yards downstream, shyly, with a bunch of other girls. If she had had a petticoat or a bra she might have swum in those, like one or two of the others, but she had neither. We sunbathed afterwards, the sexes still mildly separated, and on our way back to the bus we found a stall that actually sold bread—hunks of black bread for all comers. Life was improving!

That was thirty-one years ago, and now there are cars and ice cream and sunshades at Serebryany Bor, crude huts to undress in, well-shaven Sashas swinging transistors, and a group twisting to a recording of the Beatles which they taped from the BBC short wave. The men's trunks and the girls' two-piecers don't measure up to the transistors; they are still rather shapeless, but it is many years since it was socially possible to go in the water without them.

There are far too many people at Serebryany Bor anyway, and Michael and Nina wouldn't think of bathing there now. They got married after he came out of the prison camp, and in one way you could say that Michael's six-year sentence was a help to him. He is not merely "rehabilitated" as a citizen; the Writers' Union makes life particularly convenient for the innocent ex-prisoners among its members, and his stories sell well enough for him to run a minicar, a Zaporohzets, out to his summer hideout on an old-fashioned lake with water lilies. Nina is plump and comfortable in a well-cut English suit, Michael shaves with Gillette Blues, and their daughter Masha wears Italian spike heels and coils her rich hair in a style she learned from the East German hairdresser at the Ukraine Hotel. (Sasha, who went into the security police, is barely on nodding terms today; he has become one of those cube-shaped Russian bosses in a very light gray suit with very wide trousers. Kolya was shot.)

Beneath her comfortable exterior Nina is indelibly marked by the years of shootings and senseless arrests, and



Sour notes on a Soviet beach in the sixties: the magazine Krokodil *prescribes noise-proof beach helmets*

by the war; she lectures Masha and her contemporaries because "they expect everything to be given them. They can get any sort of training, and we had to struggle for it. They don't seem to care about public things, and they are always grumbling because they have to wait so long for the best goods to come into the shops and there are never enough . . . what are 250,000 pairs of English shoes among so many?"

Are Russians the same people, when after thirty-odd years of black bread and cabbage it is now possible to think of such things as minicars and Terylene chiffon? Minicars, or any other cars, are very few, and three yards of Terylene chiffon will cost a typist a week's salary, but "everybody," we are told, wants such things. Can Russians be the same sort of persons, when their government seems to be betting on economic progress rather than political tyranny and—although the system remains as unrepresentative, and nearly as undemocratic, as ever—when controls are loosened so far that novels about illegal arrests and prison camps can not only be published but put on the stage and screen?

Some older Russians, disoriented by the young generation which knew neither the war nor Stalin, are convinced that "people are different today." A foreigner is more likely to feel the continuity beneath the changes, but the more one sees of the Soviet Union, the more difficult it seems to reach any clear conclusions about the two fundamental questions which are always being asked —to what extent Russians are becoming "more individual," and how far they may be developing a new class structure. After four visits in the last five years, I am going to try, but my answers cannot be simple ones.

Nina and her family, of course, belong to the privileged minority; most women have to be content with waiting —and it is sometimes a long wait—for serviceable clothes in simple colors and not-too-bad designs at the standard, say, of a provincial English town in the thirties. (Even with these they are a great deal better off than they were six or seven years back.) Yet, though Nina and her friends can buy better things, they almost never (apart from a few special occasions) present an appearance as finished in every detail as the average middle-class woman does in the West, and this is not only because of shortages but because of something in the Russian character. Except for

Cartoons collected from Soviet weeklies by Sheila Ostrander and Lynn Schroeder a few actresses, and some diplomats' wives who had spent a long time abroad, almost the only girl I saw who would measure up to Western standards was the elevator operator in my hotel—a wispy blonde with blown-up hair and blued-up eyes and everything else elaborately taken care of. She works the elevator without taking her nose out of *Romangazeta*, the nearest thing Russia has to a pulp magazine. She even has the sulky, hands-off expression of the average English liftgirl, and that is part of what makes her so exceptional in Moscow. Russian women in general don't have hands-off expressions, and they don't have come-hither expressions, either. They can look, and be, rude and offhand, serious and grim, about their job or their chores, but not about their relationships with strange men. If they are attracted to a particular man they may show an openness and directness quite outside Western rules, but they are not sufficiently ego-centered or self-mistrustful to want to spend hours on their appearance, and when they go out on the street they do not have to wonder if they are attracting unwelcome attentions, because the Russian conventions for women (and for men) are a great deal easier than those in many Western countries.

An American student in Moscow, Gregory Frost, wrote delightfully about his Russian girl friend in the London *Woman's Mirror:* "She makes no effort to be invited to parties and, once at them, no effort to impress people there. . . . In private she has no special taboos and certainly no reluctance to engage in flirting and its consequences. Her lack of preoccupation with sex does not mean lack of participation." The description would fit nineteen Russian girls out of twenty. And so, though most women would naturally like English or Italian shoes, Czech sweaters, English ready-mades, and the better Soviet coats and fabrics, while they are waiting for them they are not in the same sort of state that Western women might be. They do not seem, as a rule, to be competing with each other for them, and that is very Russian. The attitudes of Russians in their new world of consumer goods are in fact very much rooted in the old Russian attitudes—with some exceptions that I shall try to describe in a moment.

One could hardly expect Russians to change basically when almost all of them are still brought up in the established ways—partly by the grandmother (because mothers don't usually give up their work), and partly on the traditional group basis, which in Soviet Russia means nurseries and kindergartens. It was a warmhearted, youngish grandmother, husbandless and devoted to her one grandchild, who wanted to persuade me that "to put a child in a nursery all day, even five days a week, at three or four or even two and a half is a good thing; it makes an excellent character." Russian children still get very permissive handling, as they did in the past, but they are also used to being with others from the earliest possible age, and they learn naturally to tolerate and make allowances for others instead of putting forward their own personalities and wants. This, perhaps, explains why one hardly ever hears a child cry in Russia, and also why adult Russians are not usually embarrassed to admit their own shortcomings. Russians do not force their company on other people, but most of them prefer company; when a Russian man takes a taxi he is more likely to sit beside the driver than in the back, and when he enters a restaurant he will usually avoid the empty tables and politely ask some other diner if he may share one with him. If the two of them get into conversation, they will be much slower at starting than Americans usually are. They may hardly talk at all, but they will have had each other's society during the meal.

There are important exceptions, however, to the general style of upbringing, and there are also widespread modifications as a result of the relaxations of the last few years and the revolution in consumer goods. The exceptions can be more striking, but the modifications seem to me on the whole more significant and of greater potential.

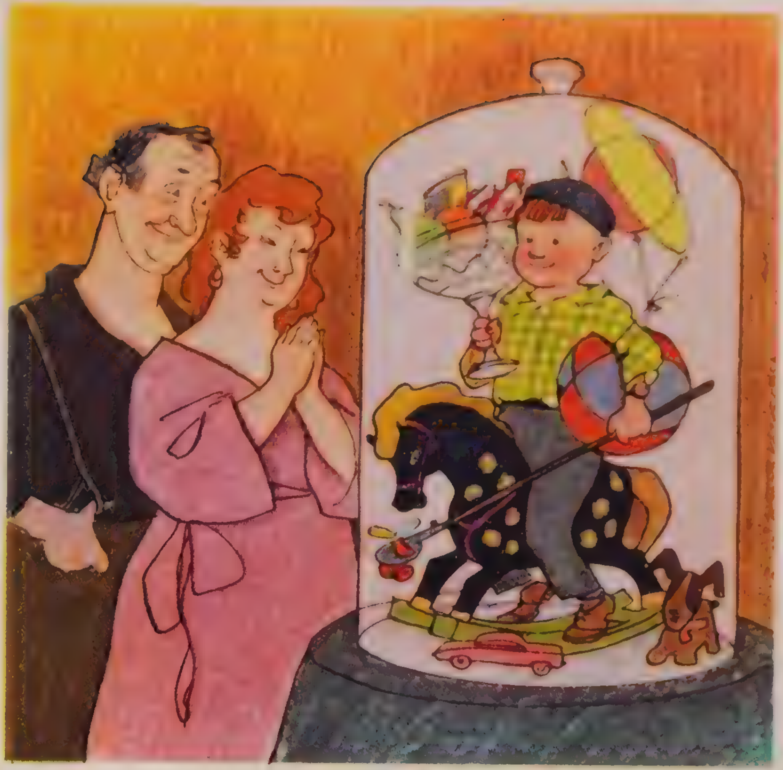
The exceptions are, first, the families where parental possessiveness takes the lead, and secondly, the families of the majority of the intelligentsia. The Russian norm is so strong that mothers who stay at home and keep the children at home are quite likely, in their exclusiveness, to be sentimental, overindulgent, and fussy, and to spoil the children—or the child (the one-child family is terribly common in the cities). Soviet opinion traces much juvenile delinquency to such families, which must also be responsible for some of the self-preoccupied types who stand out, like my elevator girl. These parentally possessive families are likely to grow in number as millions of Soviet citizens move out of cramped huts or shared apartments into flats of their own where they can turn the key against the world. Even so, they will probably remain a minority, reflecting differences of temperament or the dissatisfaction of some parents with their own childhood; I see no likelihood of their developing into a separate social class.

It is otherwise with the intelligentsia, who are sometimes even spoken of officially as a "New Class" alongside the workers and the collective farmers. Among the prerevolutionary intelligentsia there was a strong tradition of bringing children up in the Western manner, and this has been handed down to many in the Soviet generations. Also, the new intelligentsia are necessarily recruited from men and women of some originality or peculiarity, or from people who understand the importance of high standards at least in their own speciality. Soviet parents in general are serious about education, but many, perhaps most, of the intelligentsia take a particular hand in the education of their children; I know one family of six children who all learned English from their father at an early age. And this parental attitude and assistance probably persists, even though children may be sent to nurseries and attend the same school as their neighbors. (It is compulsory in Russia to attend the nearest school, but the intelligentsia do tend to congregate in certain districts, or are put there by the authorities.) Russian schooling is mostly learning by rote—there is none of the "eliciting" beloved of American or British teachers—but for the brighter older children there is beginning to be a different approach, as in the special mathematics courses where students are immediately given problems to get their teeth into. This new type arose at the urgent request of the country's scientists, who found that undifferentiated schooling did not produce university entrants of the standard they required.

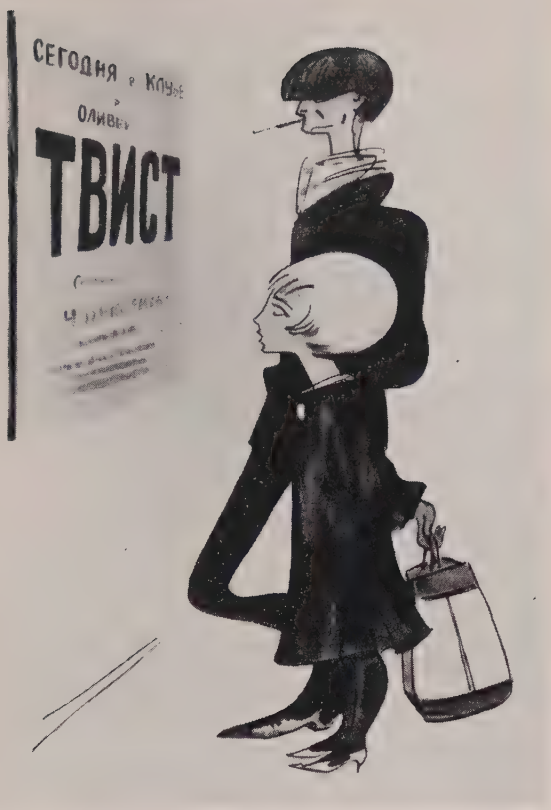
But opportunities for higher education—even for secondary education after the school-leaving age of fifteen—are still mainly concentrated in the towns and cities. A researcher, V. Shubkin, writing in *Problems of Philosophy*, reports that in the province centered on Novosibirsk, 98 per cent of the children of city intelligentsia wanted more education after fifteen, and 85 per cent were in fact able to get it; but only 10 per cent of the children of agricultural workers were able to do so, although 90 per cent of them would have liked to get it. Shubkin draws the conclusion—obvious to us but not mentionable in the Soviet Union until recently—that the relative prosperity and intelligence of parents, and the concentration of higher education in towns, run the danger of creating a privileged class which can pass on its privileges.

Khrushchev tried to even out the classes by imposing a compulsory interval of two years' "productive work" between leaving school and entering a higher institution, but this proved unsatisfactory from the educational point of view and has been abandoned. Soviet industry and agriculture are short of all kinds of trained labor, technicians, and managers, partly owing to wartime casualties and the wartime fall in the birth rate, and partly because a quarter of the nation's labor force and perhaps half of the technicians are working in the defense or space industries. Education is therefore required urgently, to produce "specialists" of all kinds from microbotanists to milkmaids, and this need will compete with the egalitarian principle for a long time to come.

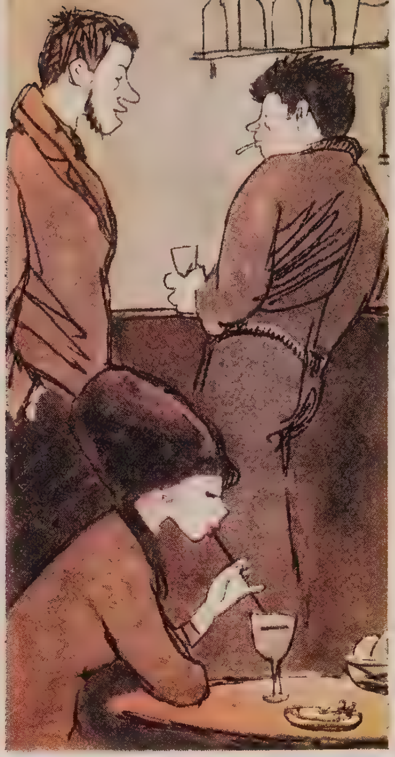
At the top of the intelligentsia are the people who so delight foreigners with their passion for Henry Moore, Stravinsky, Kafka, Antonioni, J. D. Salinger, Sartre, and indeed the whole of recent Western culture. They no longer have to depend entirely upon books and records brought in by the rare Soviet travelers, although there must by now be a fine stock of such material in private circulation. The State Library for Foreign Literature publishes a thick list of accessions of new foreign books every week, and foreign films such as *Tom Jones*, which do not reach the general public, are circulated among clubs and societies. There is now a section of the intelligentsia to whom the word "highbrow" in its true sense may be applied, intellectuals who enjoy their own exclusiveness and comment pharisaically on *La Dolce Vita* or Camus: "What a pity so few can appreciate these!" But the best of the intellectuals are really inspiring, not simply because they share one's own tastes, but because they are so often more humane and honest in their judgments than the general run of reviewers and academics in the West. These are the most truly individual people in Russia. They include scientists as well as men and women working in the arts. They often have original hobbies; some of them, rare among Russian housewives, are even enthusiastic and excellent cooks! They are not above soiling their hands with manual work; I am told that Leonid Kogan, the violinist, and Galina Ulanova, the ballerina, are among those whose joy it is to tinker with their cars. They take original holidays—on the cool, empty beaches of the Baltic, for instance, instead of the crowded, sweaty Black Sea coast. Most of them have a conscience about their country, and they would like more of their fellow countrymen to want to get away from the need to share tables, so to speak, in life's restaurant; they say they feel "suffocated by *sobornost*" (the old Russian word for congregationality). They are so engagingly anxious to make a good impression that one has to learn to discount much of what they say; I was asked to believe, for instance, that "almost everyone in the cities reads Harold Pinter"—a playwright who has not even been translated into Russian. As conversation



On one way of rearing children:
"The main thing is to protect him from bad influences."



Dance, not Dickens, is the message two hipsters get from a playbill announcing Oliver Twist.



Lamenting a mutual friend, one swinger to another: "Gareek's gone to seed completely—went to the mines and started to work!"

continues, however, they admit that though their personal example filters down through students and others, it is only by slow and cautious degrees that they can hope to influence the general face of Soviet culture.

But this is only the top of the intelligentsia, the crest of that wave surging forward to Culture in all its varied and sometimes vulgar Soviet connotations. "The intelligentsia" means much more than "the intellectuals"; in Soviet parlance it covers roughly all specialized non-manual jobs, or more than a fifth of the working population. This is the class which gets the greatest social respect, rather than the persons who are climbing the ladder of power, or the persons who simply have more money. (One hears of crudely expressed envy and Philistinism among some manual workers, but since the ladder of ascent is still a wide one—and since the lower grades of intelligentsia in fact earn less than skilled manual workers do—these attitudes do not seem to constitute a danger for the present.)

Most Russians have a remarkably careless attitude toward money, even though they have little of it. When they have it, most of them spend it. It is not something to hoard or invest. If you are short the last five kopecks, the waitress says "Forget it!"—"*Nichevo!*" And as money is not so important, there is a trustfulness about it. You read your own electric meter, and you are supposed to put your own fare in the coin box on buses without a conductor, which most people apparently do. When I last entered Russia by train, rubleless, the manageress of the dining car was quite content to allow me seven dollars' worth of credit for my meals: "You can bring it to me tomorrow, when the train is in Moscow. We shall be on the siding all day."

These last instances, I think, are important. They suggest that although all Russians want very much to improve their standard of living, and the majority probably want to graduate out of manual work, they have no general desire to do so through commercial enterprise. Some Russians do engage in it on a small scale—the peasants legally, others quite illegally. The peasants have been free, for the last thirty-six years, to sell the produce of their private plots for what they could get in the market, and under Kosygin they are encouraged to do this even more. In the early summer some of those who live in the south find that it pays them to take the plane from Georgia to Moscow and back in order to sell the first strawberries at inflated prices. There are also rather more people than there used to be, one gathers, who exploit their positions in industry or administration to run petty rackets or surreptitious little manufacturing enterprises, although they run the risk of a twenty-year sentence if they are caught. But the typical Russian attitude to these traders, I think, would be: "Who wants to live like a peasant anyway, or like a smalltime businessman, if you can get a steady job, with good pay, where you are not chased around too much? You can make a little extra in your spare time, if you want, by doing repairs, say, or by typing or giving lessons. All this is legal, and if you stretch the law a bit, for example in your income tax return, you will probably get away with it. But to have to depend on trading for your living, even if it were legal . . . !" Among several dozen former Soviet citizens now in England, I know industrial and agricultural workers, translators, typists, and technicians, but only two who have set themselves up in a trade.

I have probably given the impression so far that the standards of Soviet life are rather more advanced than they actually are. Material "advances" for the average citizen are comparatively small at any one time, the pace is slow, and there are many deficiencies, delays, exasperations, and sloppinesses. Imported goods are snapped up because although they are expensive their quality is better. But small as the advances may be, they do matter immensely; because they affect the mass of the population, they are more significant than the Sartre and minicar standards of the few, which are easier for us to grasp.

The early training in group loyalties does not mean that the Soviet Union doesn't differ as widely as any other nation in the interests and occupations of its individuals, and there is much more variety and divergence than there used to be. A Saturday afternoon in Moscow is the time to make comparisons—after three o'clock, when work finishes for the week and the shops are crammed, not only with people buying necessities. Mothers lead children hopefully to the possibility of a new kind of toy; men queue up for fishhooks and color film; and in the map shop—the only map shop—there is at last an issue of maps of the Moscow district. A poetic-looking, spectacled young Jew is staring dreamily into the distance after consulting his little map—a poor, semi-pictorial map such as tourist agencies in other countries use for free publicity, but it is going to give him the freedom of the forest and the villages at weekends. Outside the pet shop, where so often there was only birdseed for sale, some youths are gathered round a boy who has bought a live tortoise and is trying it out on the pavement. And in the stamp shop, one of three in central Moscow, small boys are vociferating around the counter where sets of Soviet matchbox labels are to be had—two hundred of them in all. There has never been "enough to do" in Moscow, but things are getting better. There are more shops and far more cafés, of both the sit-down and the stand-up self-service variety. Even peasants are much better dressed than they were; a woman on a collective farm may have Sunday dresses, a new glass-fronted cupboard, and a smart white low-slung baby carriage even though she lives in a traditional wooden *izba* and has to walk two hundred yards to get water. And people are anything but satisfied. One hears repeatedly, from the press as well as in conversation, that "bad designs and shoddy goods get left on the shelves." I asked what the simpler country people do when they come to town: "How can they tell good quality from bad?" "The peasant girl," I was told, "simply buys what is most expensive!"

All this growth is the chief element in the "modification" of which I spoke earlier. It affects everyone—the minority brought up on a more individualistic basis, as well as the majority brought up in the group tradition. What is more, it means—and the new housing especially means—that willy-nilly there is more personal life and more development of private relationships than there used to be. And so the group-bred young Russian often feels rather lost and unguided, like a Western teen-ager. The young people who throng the cafés at night are full of vitality and often charm, but they are reticent with one another, willing perhaps to hurl Cupid's darts but afraid to have them strike—"rather like England in the thirties," as a visitor said. They flock to the few plays that deal exclusively—almost shockingly, to the older generation—with personal, unpolitical situations. Radzynsky's *Once More About Love* is the simple story of a pretty airline stewardess seduced by a young scientist who affects a heartless, ungallant sort of detachment and dominance, rather in the style of a French film hero, which young men in the audience may envy but few will be capable of. We are actually shown the post-seduction scene (with both parties fully dressed, except that he has his shoes off). And through the laboratory where he works there weaves an apparently hard-boiled, razor-tongued young assistant in a sexy skirt, fit for the office of a Western advertising agency; yet beneath her bold exterior she is hopelessly and innocently in love with another assistant, a boyish young man who won't come up to scratch. I heard one English visitor dismiss this play as "Rattigan-and-water," but to me and the Russian audience it was the most sophisticated Soviet play ever put on. A few recent plays and films (for example, *I Walk Around Moscow*) and many short stories are "open-ended," in the best Russian tradition; life is not forced into molds, and the young people—who we are constantly told are "detached from politics"—are delighted to see life reflected in its incompleteness, as they know it.

On my last visit I thought that old-fashioned Russian coarseness and drunkenness were rather more in evidence, and this I take also to be an expression—surely an inevitable if temporary one—of more individuality. There is far more grumbling, which seems a hopeful sign. And there is less wearing of decorations and lapel badges—a minor revulsion, I think, against officialdom, which was handing out more and more of these. To leave off such badges might appear to merge you in the crowd, but it could also be a tiny assertion of individuality.

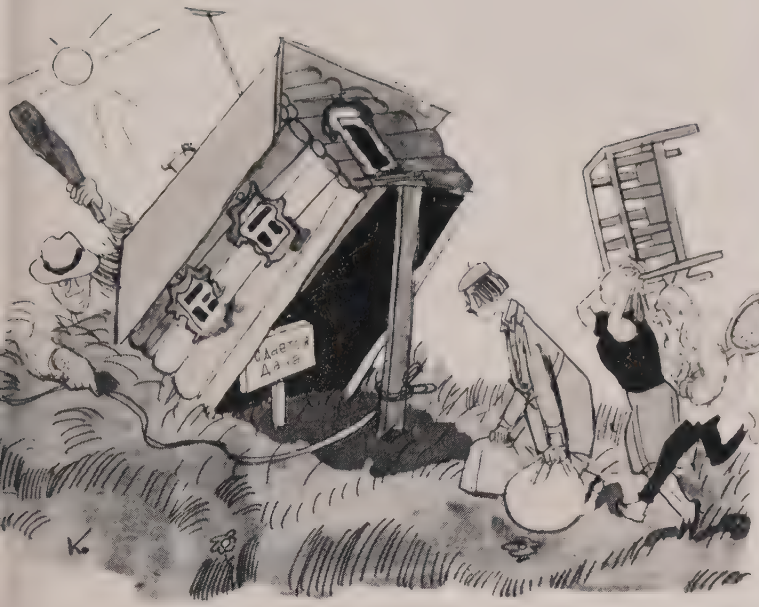
Yet all these new liberties grow from the roots of Russian group feelings and the basic Russian aversion to self-assertion. It is still difficult to guess the job or the social importance of most townspeople, either by their dress or their bearing. And even when differences are clear, restaurants will welcome distinguished-looking professors and collarless manual workers alike. Cultured or academic people speak with the same gentle consideration to menial workers as they do to any stranger, and the menial workers make the same sort of approach to any fellow citizen. The exceptions are in some of the relations with authority, but these are felt to show acceptance of the inexorable rather than to infringe the general rule. Foreigners, even when they speak no Russian, feel that although they may be interfered with by the authorities over the taking of photographs or crossing the road and although Soviet bureaucracy seems constructed for the purpose of hampering them, yet from the mass of unofficial Russians they have very little to fear; Russians seem far less menacing than the population in many other countries where one does not know the language.

But there is another side to all this. Why do most Russians still barge into you in the street, not personally as it were, but as though it did not matter? Why are shop assistants so often rude? Why do so many people ignore a simple request until you have warmed up some kind of personal relationship with them? It is different in Riga or Tallin, where Latvian and Estonian efficiency and manners seem to have survived twenty years of Soviet rule. These are the good manners of individuals, for Latvians and Estonians are not brought up in the group tradition, and even Russians admire the ease with which daily difficulties can be sorted out in the two Baltic republics. There does seem to be something lacking in the individuality of most Russians outside of those at the very top of society. Is it that the early development of social relations discourages the full growth of individual responsibility? We think of responsibility for oneself as a continuing thing, and not only for emergencies. Russians are resourceful people and can rise to great heights in an emergency, but a Russian child is not encouraged to feel his own power among others as is an American, a British, or a French child. When he grows up he is certainly less tense than the average Westerner, but he also takes his place in a hierarchy which is organizational and not social, where he may indulge in the little displays of power that are permitted him—and he often makes them nasty little displays, like those of an officious museum attendant, because he does not feel really at home with power.

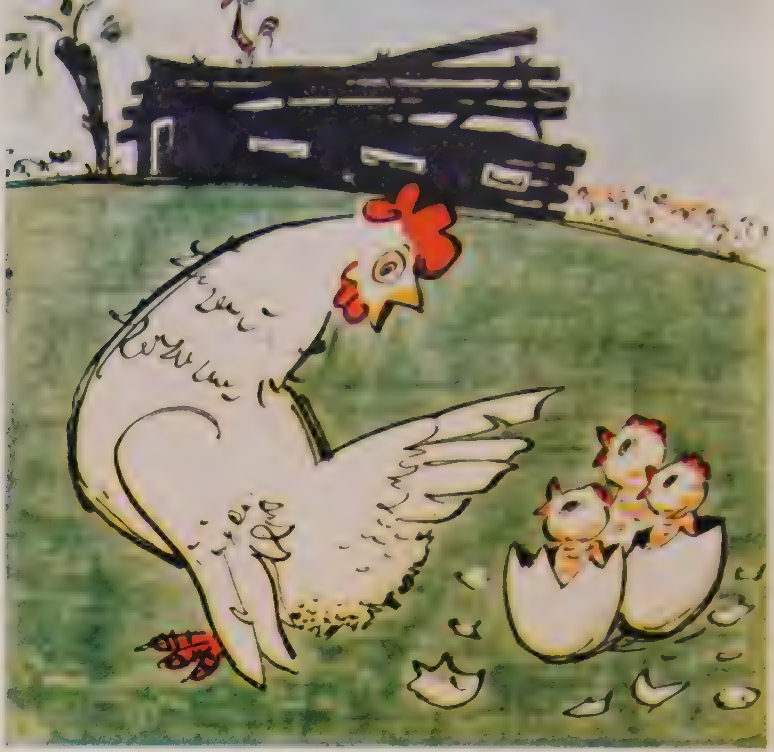
Russians have developed a very keen sense for grades in the hierarchy of organization, for it is essential in Soviet life to know the right level of person to approach. And this kind of hierarchy is going to persist in the foreseeable future, in spite of the new liberties which are being tried out in factories and retail stores. The political framework of the Soviet Union remains, in essence, what it has always been, although it is currently being administered with much more humanity and common sense. At the top, oligarchy has replaced one-man rule, at least for the time being; the press features individual leaders comparatively little, and there are far fewer slogans and posters in the streets than there used to be—much less than the volume of commercial posters in other countries. At the lowest levels, as in the making of a garden or a library for a residential block; in the "comrades' courts"; and in sports—which seem to run with little political control—there is freedom for people who want to show initiative. The young, too, are allowed freer discussion; "if one member of the Komsomol makes a protest," someone told me, "many more will join in."

In spite of all this I would still risk saying that very few Russians want to take a hand in governing their country in the sense in which Westerners understand it. One does not argue about the main policy lines, even though one may discuss their detailed application. And it would still be possible, though unlikely, for an unscrupulous power-seeker to use the government and Party machine, over a period of time, to make himself dictator. In these circumstances, naturally, nothing is done to encourage Soviet citizens to question major policy lines, and many of them, I am sure, would be alarmed at the suggestion that they should do so. "We still feel," said a wise professor to me, "that 'discussion' is something such as you have read of in Russian novels—talking all night, and no one taking any responsibility at the end of it." And the journal *Party Life* recently recalled Lenin's opinion that it would be "the greatest evil" to allow any of the Party committees, even the highest, to become "a talking shop."

There are great reserves of talent, sensibility, and energy among Russians, but they still seem to shy away from taking that sort of responsibility which involves power relations or setting oneself above others. The managers do have to take this sort of responsibility (though they are far more bedeviled by bureaucracy than Western managers), and it is managerial people, along with some academics, who took the lead in pressing for reforms such as the new system proclaimed last October, which now sets factories a target of goods sold, instead of mere gross output. And along with the new importance of managers, the most important recent change in Soviet political life has been the freedom of expression allowed to consumer complaints and demands. One has only to read the Soviet press to learn about these: the *Higher Schools Review* complains that textbooks are not to be had in subject after subject and city after city; *Soviet Photo* quotes amateurs who "can rarely find photographic paper in Nalchik, in Voronezh, in Krasnodar," and who in Volgograd say that "standard developer has long since disappeared from the stores"; and *New Products* devotes a page to the inefficiency and bad finish of Soviet electrical apparatus, which is "simply not up to world standards." These consumer reactions are collected and collated through trade-union, local government, and



"*Spring Catch*"*—the hazards of renting a country* dacha



Barnyard colloquy on housing, hen to chicks: "So why don't you climb out?" Prudent response: "And live where?"

Party channels as well as the press; they are a mass expression and very Russian. "Democracy" of this kind is clearly going to increase and to percolate higher and higher, although the upper reaches of the political and production machines preserve the same pyramidal structure as before.

Last summer I asked a number of Russians how they interpreted the May Day slogan "Forward to Communism." There was a remarkable similarity in the replies I got, whether from Party types, self-seeking types, or intelligentsia. "First of all, peace"—this was unanimous, though some lingered over it while others tossed it aside as obvious; and second and without exception, "material things—more of them, and better quality." After that they diverged a little. "More efficiency," said a Party man; "in our country it takes ten men to do what three do elsewhere." "Moral progress," said a serious professional woman of the older generation; "more respect for property, for *public* property."

No one should imagine that the Soviet Union is "giving up Socialism" just because market values and profitability are beginning to be used as criteria as well as the overall fulfillment of the Plan; private ownership of the means of production is simply not going to return. And one should beware, also, of reading too much into the striking individual instances of protest, experiment, or relaxation which so easily make Western headlines. It looks as though the next few years in the Soviet Union are going to see a great growth of practical, managerial experiments and adjustments but few spectacular turns of basic policy, and for this we may surely feel thankful. The changes will generate a flood of reactions, strains, protests, irking maladjustments, and sheer apathy among the Soviet people, which foreign correspondents will probably call "a ferment." But we should remember that what Russians demand of government above all is that it should be effective. If internal upheavals should ever look as though they might threaten the established system of government, most Russians in my opinion would rally round the existing order.

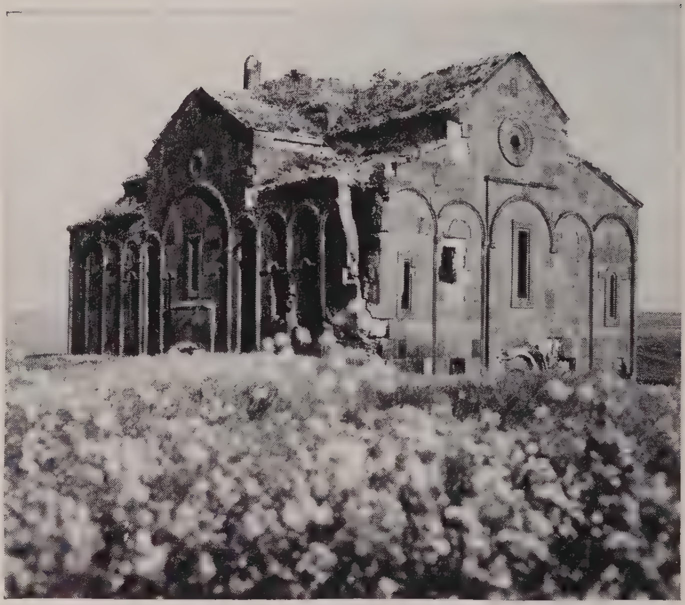
It is possible that after some years of these changes a new class structure will become more sharply defined. If so, it is unlikely to resemble the class structure of Western countries. It could look like the old Russian arrangement of an elite and the masses; but whatever the "horizontal" arrangement might be, so long as the mass of the people continued to share the increasing prosperity I would expect the hierarchy to be modified by the beginnings of a "vertical" alignment of "classes" by tempermanent, interests, and tastes—such as is already cutting across the hierarchies of money, breeding, and talent in the West.

"Richard Symont" is the pseudonym of a distinguished British specialist in Soviet affairs who has written four books about Russia, and has a firsthand acquaintance with that country which extends over thirty years.

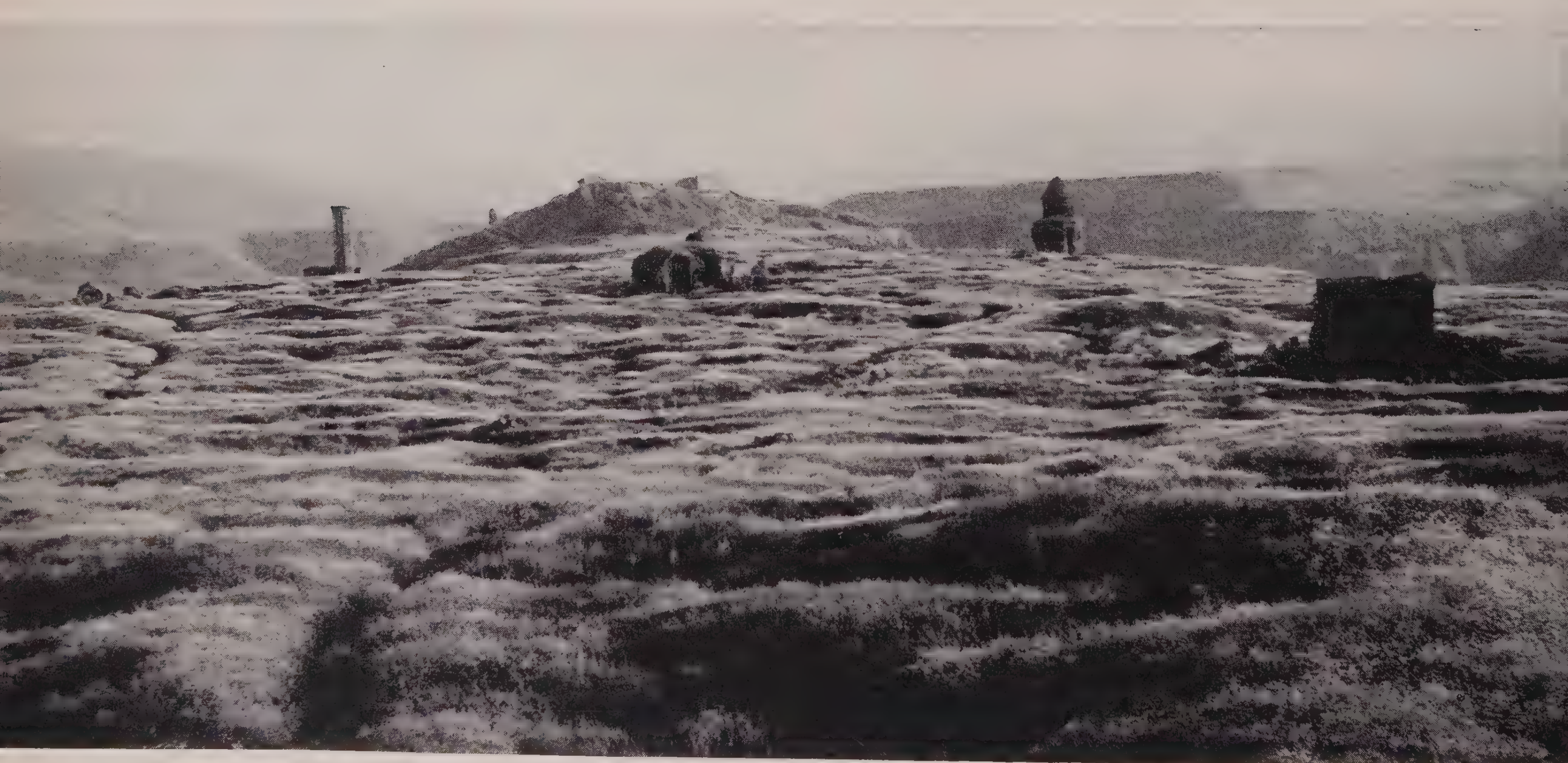
Now isolated and almost unknown,
the unique churches of Armenia may have held
the seed of a great architectural style

From a Forgotten Kingdom

The ruined city of Ani stands in a desolate corner of northeastern Turkey not far from the Black Sea. It is within a few yards of the heavily guarded Soviet frontier, and the Turkish government allows very few civilians to visit this no man's land. One of the few—Ara Güler—recently took the unusual photographs of the site that are reproduced on this and the following three pages.

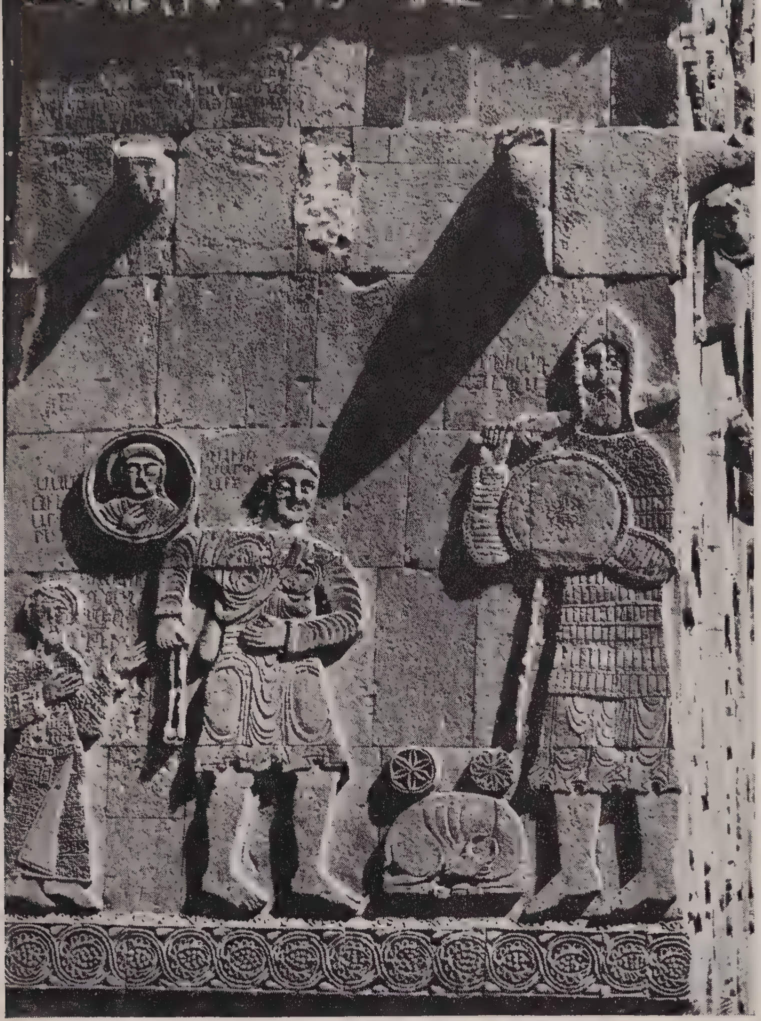


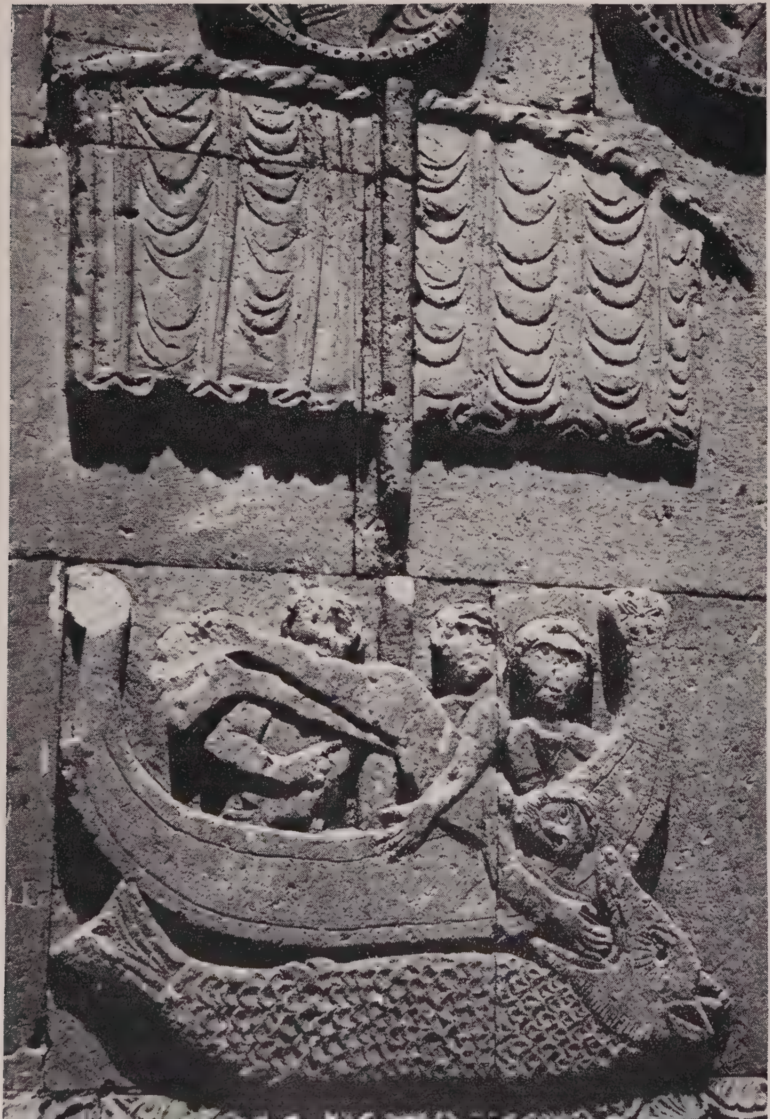
In the tenth century, as the capital of Christian Armenia, Ani was a flourishing religious and artistic center ruled by Christian kings. In A.D. 303, some ten years before the emperor Constantine proclaimed his vision of the Cross, Armenia became the first nation of the world to adopt Christianity as its official religion. From the beginning of its tragic history, Armenia had to engage in almost continual warfare to preserve its identity, principally against the latter-day Persian Empire, then against



Photographs by ARA GÜLER

The photograph above, taken from a vantage point on the city walls, shows three churches and a watchtower scattered across Ani's desolate plain. The domed Cathedral of St. Gregory, shown on this page, and the Church of the Holy Saviour, opposite, may be forerunners of the Gothic cathedrals of Europe. They were built in the late tenth century.



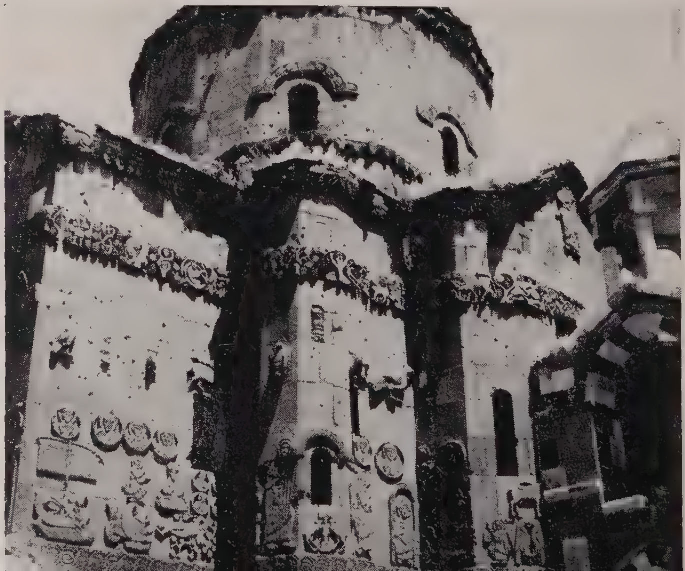


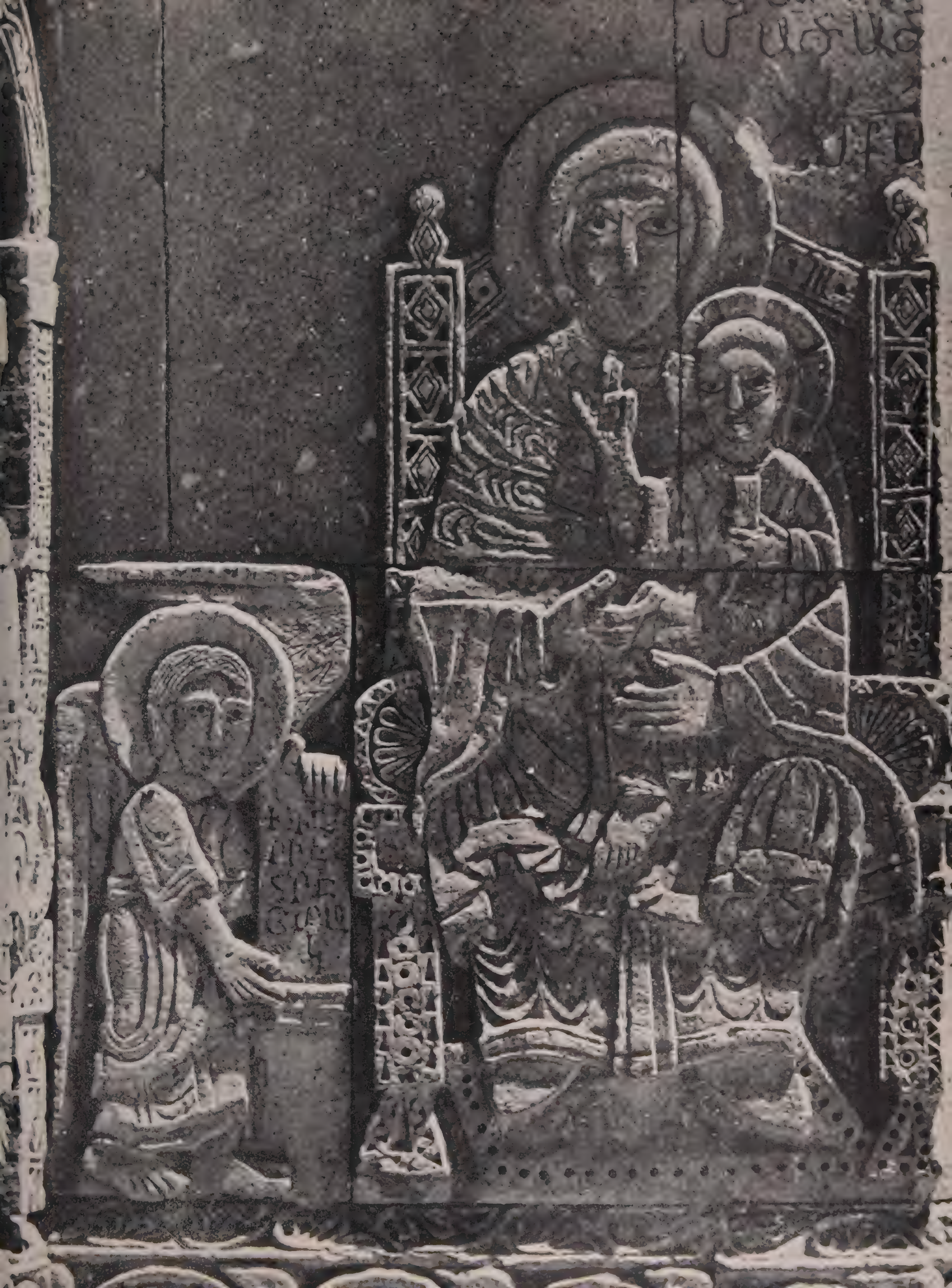
the Arabs who swept into Persia. During the tenth century a new dynasty succeeded in establishing itself at Ani, and as a result of some shrewd negotiations with the caliph at Baghdad, in 926 Ashot III the Merciful was crowned King of Kings of Armenia. He can safely be counted among the world's forgotten monarchs, yet under his wise rule, and that of his successors, Ani came to be one of the largest of medieval cities, known in the Byzantine world and parts west as "the city of a thousand and one churches." It was also a city of palaces, hospitals, public gardens, and caravansaries. A chronicler of the period left this description of Ani: "Princes with joyous countenances sit upon princely thrones. They are clad in brilliant colors, like gardens in bloom. . . . The sound of flutes and cymbals fills one's heart with comfort and joy."

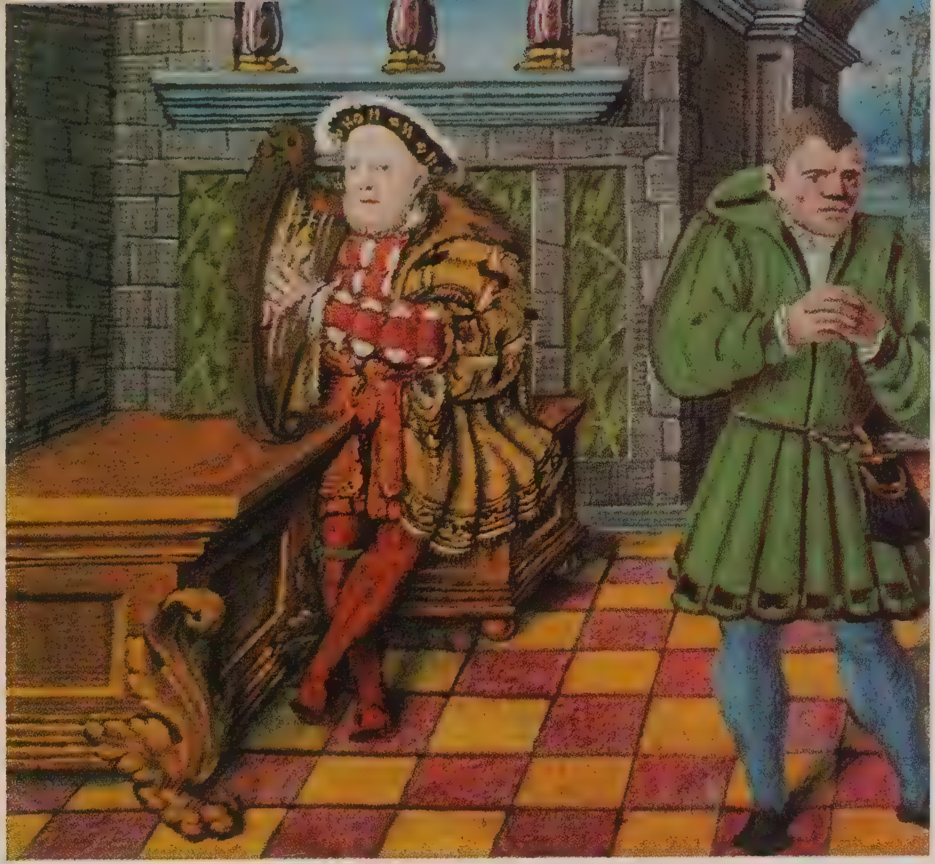
But the princely smiles vanished all too soon. Internal feuds arose, foreign powers invaded the land (including the dreaded Seljuk Turks), and in 1319 an earthquake wrecked the city. The palaces and gardens, flutes and cymbals, are gone, but six of the churches (and one on Lake Van some distance away) survive as evidence of the genius of Armenian architects. The invading Turks were quick to copy the circular design and conical roof of these churches for the tombs they later built in Anatolia. But the most lasting influence of Ani may have been in the West. Certain structural innovations such as clustered columns, ribbed vaults, and pointed arches have led critics to believe that here was born the Gothic style, a century before it appeared in Europe. Armenian architecture had great influence on the Balkan countries, and builders from Armenia may well have carried new ideas as far as France and Italy.

However this may be, these churches of Ani deserve to be known for their own special beauty—the skillful masonry, the delicately carved decoration, and the inventiveness that are as impressive today as they must have been in the tenth century. In those early days the nation that was crushed in the political upheavals of our times had its moment of prosperity and peace. S.T.

The Church of Aghtamar (below) is on an island in Lake Van. Details from its façade depict David and Goliath (top left), Jonah cast from his boat into the mouth of a dog-like whale (below left), and the Virgin and Child (opposite).







BY PERMISSION OF THE TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM

His royal psalter shows Henry, attended by a jester, playing a harp like King David

THE KING IS DEAD, LONG LIVE THE KING!

By LACEY BALDWIN SMITH

Who would govern England after Henry VIII? The dying King refused to tell, for by telling he might diminish his own authority

In a close, paneled room heavy with the scent of perfume to cloak the stench of sickness, that serene and invincible prince, Henry VIII, lay dying. Grudgingly the swollen and blackened body gave way to death, but even in the final and prolonged struggle, the King was loath to consider the possibility that the end was near. His "entirely beloved councilors" and right trusty gentlemen of the bedchamber, however, were not so reluctant; with an eye to their own future fortunes, they watched and waited and tried to calculate the moment when that Godly Imp, the nine-year-old Prince Edward, would sit upon his father's throne.

In 1546 the evidence that the King's days were numbered was impressive. The once firm flesh was now sadly "fallen away," and Henry stayed close to his inner closet and the company of his aging cronies. Fierce vitality and dogged determination to live prevented the sagging body from disintegrating into a shapeless sack of flesh, but three times within the year, in March, October, and again in December, Henry tasted death as the inflamed ulcer on his leg cut off circulation and sent spasms of pain and burning fever through his body. As the medical expenses for the Privy Chamber began to soar—£4/17/6 in August, £13/11/2 in September, and £25/0/4 in December—and as men began to whisper about a machine to hoist the obese and helpless monarch up and down stairs, those who had access to the royal bedchamber unconsciously slipped from vague, inarticulate concern over the eventual possibility of the monarch's death to a precise consideration of the day he must die.

But no prediction was reliable, no plan for the future secure. Between spells of fever and excruciating pain the King would ignore his doctor's advice, remorselessly goad his body into activity, and belie the chronic rumors of his demise by riding to the hunt or perambulating about his kingdom. Looking backward through the centuries, historians know the exact instant of Henry's death—two o'clock of the morning of Friday, January 28, 1547; but while contemporaries knew that their sovereign might die within the month or the year, they also had to reckon with the awful possibility that he might linger on as a dangerous and senile invalid.

As the autumn days shortened, so also did tempers at court. John Dudley, the Lord Admiral, flared out at

Stephen Gardiner, the wily Bishop of Winchester, and struck him "in full council." The Earl of Hertford, the King's brother-in-law, had "violent and injurious words" with the Lord Chancellor; Bishop Tunstáll quarreled with Mr. Secretary Paget over the sale of ecclesiastical lands; and the young Earl of Surrey clashed violently with one of the gentlemen of the bedchamber over who was best suited to rule the young prince after his father's death. Each member of the Privy Council suspected his colleagues of seeking to blind the King's "eyes with mists"; and it was noted that courtiers and ministers "did never suggest unto him any thing to the destruction of any man, or speak any thing for their own benefit" except in the evening, when the King was comfortably filled with wine, or "when he had gone largely to the stool, for then he used to be very pleasant."

In this atmosphere, where it was high treason even to imagine any bodily harm to the sovereign, wise men stepped cautiously, for the times, it was said, were "difficult and one can neither speak nor be silent without danger." Members of the Privy Council were loath to offend the monarch by doing too much or too little. They sought instead to do what was "agreeable to the King's Majesty's pleasure," and they tried to follow Dr. Nicholas Wotton's advice: "Always speak last" and be master of your opponent's strength before displaying your own.

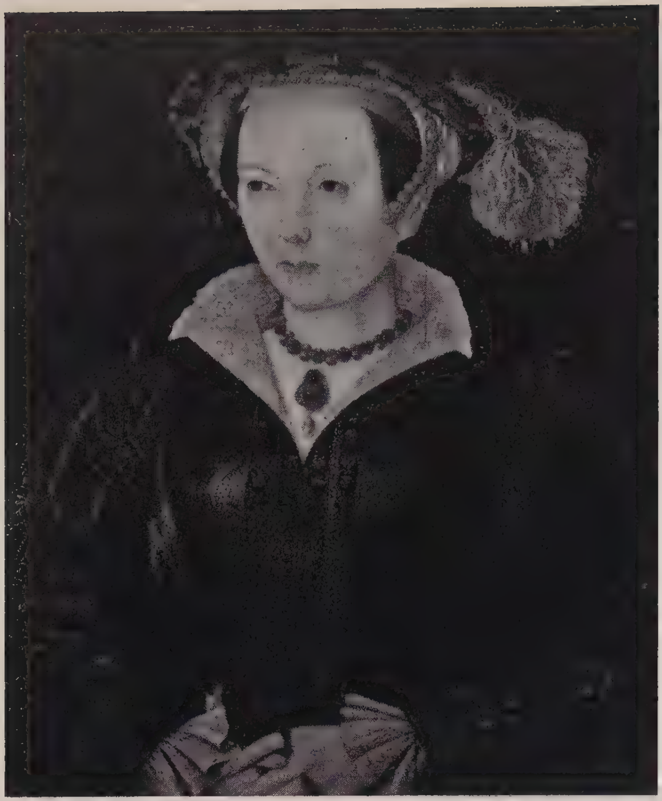
On all sides there was fear and uncertainty. Foreign observers secretly predicted that the succession of a nine-year-old boy would lead to domestic discord, even to civil war if the German emperor showed any signs of supporting Princess Mary's claim to the throne, and it was publicly acknowledged in France that when Henry died, "so good an opening for war would not be allowed to pass." Religious radicals and conservatives both had the deepest misgivings about the future. A worried Protestant wrote to the King's personal physician and one of the grooms of the bedchamber asking, "what think your worships they [the secret Catholics] would attempt if His Majesty were at God's mercy?" The conservative Bishop of Winchester was equally troubled; during the old King's life, he said, he feared "not these fond malicious follies" of the Protestants, but "when those that now be young" shall take over, then was the time to worry about "what is like to ensue thereof."

Far more disturbing than the future was the terror of the present, for it was manifestly clear that the child king would be controlled by the man who could get closest to the dying father. But it was always difficult to know where one stood with the King, and even as Henry lay *in extremis* it was reported that "many men's names were gathered and enrolled together in a catalogue, and at that time accused unto the King. . . ." Few men could say whether such a list in fact existed or whose names were on it. The French ambassador, Monsieur Odet de Selve, sensed the mounting anxiety during the winter of 1546–47, and reported that he was having great trouble building an effective spy system since his service was so dangerous that not many cared to give him information except for money. All men in England, he noted, were easily bribed, and he urged the spending of large sums, for "there is no certainty which way the English will take." Monsieur de Selve was rarely in agreement with his rival the Imperial ambassador, but on one issue they were in accord—the mutability of English politics: the one exclaiming that "affairs here change almost daily," the other concurring with him that the English were "naturally changeable."

The machinery of government for the new reign had already been established by Henry in his last will and testament drawn up some time after 1543, and all his councilors knew that in it he had named a council of regency for young Edward. They also knew—as Henry never ceased to remind them—that their names could easily be removed and others added. It was a well-known axiom of monarchy that "after the death of a long-reigning prince . . . discontented minds or wits long starved for want of employment" would bring forward "many new projects, suits, inventions, and infinite complaints" and present them to the new king. All those projects and inventions were in the making during November and December of 1546, but the factor that made every design doubly dangerous was that no one at court knew whom to approach. No one could predict who would rule in the name of a nine-year-old monarch, for Henry had studiously refused to indicate by some special act of favor or name in his testament the man who would be Lord Protector and Governor of his son.

The extent and nature of the intrigue going on behind Henry's back is difficult to assess if only because, by necessity, it had to be secret, but two factions stood arrayed against one another—the Howard clan headed by the ranking peer, the elderly Duke of Norfolk, and by his brilliant if neurotic son, Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey; and the Seymour interests led by Edward Seymour, Earl of Hertford. Surrey and Hertford were the two poles around which the hopes for the future were bound to gather, for Edward Seymour was the elder uncle of the Prince, and Henry Howard was heir to the most important dukedom in England and in his own right a potential claimant to the throne. He was not only the eldest son of the Duke of Norfolk and could claim Plantagenet blood, but he was also the grandson, on his mother's side, of the Duke of Buckingham, whom Henry executed in 1521 largely because he was a direct descendant of Edward III and thus had had a claim to the throne. By ancient and royal blood and noble breeding, Surrey considered that he and his father were far more fit to govern the young Prince than the parvenu maternal uncle of the boy.

Exactly what the Hertford faction was up to is difficult to surmise. Edward Seymour seems to have played his



COLLECTION OF H. C. PARR

Henry's last queen, Catherine Parr, managed to survive her capricious husband, although it once seemed as though he might execute her for treason.

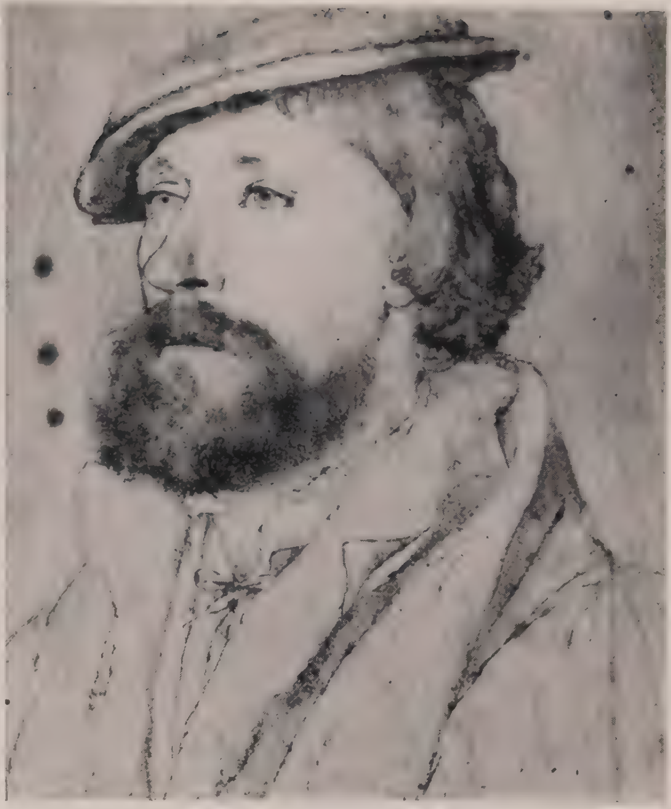
cards close to his chest and to have followed Bishop Gardiner's advice "to be noted neither on the one side nor on the other." However, Eustace Chapuys, who had lived in England for fifteen years as ambassador for the emperor Charles V, noted that Seymour and his close friend and ally John Dudley favored the Protestant ideology because of "their plans to obtain the government of the Prince." These designs consisted largely of trying to discredit their opponents and persuading Henry to indicate by some sign that he regarded the Earl of Hertford as the man who was of "fit age and ability" to rule in his stead. In the first aim they were supremely successful, for partly as a result of their intrigues, the house of Howard fell into disgrace, but in the scramble for honors they seemed to have been thwarted, if only so long as the King lived. Their opponent was the Lord Chancellor, Thomas Wriothesley, who later claimed credit for having urged the King not to elevate the Earl of Hertford to a dukedom or name him Lord Protector for the new reign. The Hertford cabal may also have been endeavoring to counter any possible claim to the throne on the part of the young Prince's eldest sister, the twenty-nine-year-old Princess Mary, daughter of Catherine of Aragon and first cousin of Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor. In order to do this, Hertford almost by necessity had to curry favor with the religious reformers, to guard his interests against those of Catholic Mary.

The plotting on the part of the Howard clan is better documented, mainly because one of them, the Earl of Surrey, got caught at it. Henry Howard was a poetic genius, yet he was also a singularly silly young man who indulged in the dangerous conceit of advertising his Plantagenet blood in October of 1546 by claiming the royal arms of Edward the Confessor as part of his heraldic device. He was quickly brought to trial and was accused of planning a *coup d'état*, of plotting to murder the members of the Privy Council and seize the person of the old King and his son. In truth, he seems to have been doing something less daring but almost as hazardous; like the Seymour brothers and almost everybody else at court, he was discussing the future, laying plans, and sounding out the uncommitted members of the council by offering them rich plums of office in the next reign. The trouble with Surrey was that he could not keep his mouth shut. He was reported to have said of one of his enemies that "if the King were dead, I should shortly shut him up," and he foolishly talked about low-born men in high office, and "new erected men" at court who would fare very differently as soon as Edward came to the throne. Most fatal of all, he failed to reckon with the character and willful caprice of a sovereign who delighted in playing cat and mouse with his councilors, who was determined to own his courtiers body and soul, who was always willing to listen to evil about his lieutenants, and who regarded any mention of his death as high treason.

Plagued by headaches, attacks of fever, twinges of gout, and spasms of pain from his ulcerated leg, Henry lost his "accustomed patience"; his temper sharpened to the point where it was observed that he was "often of a different opinion in the morning than after dinner." More and more he "lived and moved by engines and art, rather than by nature," for he grew so fat and dropsical that it was agony to walk, but even greater agony to diet. In the end, when his bloated corpse was opened up, all the arteries were found to be swollen and "there was hardly half a pint of pure blood in his whole body." Age had dug deep trenches upon a face once as pink and delicate as a young bride's; the soft beard of red and gold had given way to coarse white; the sturdy muscular belly was now a sagging deformity of fifty-four inches; and youth's proud livery had long since been cast aside for the warm gowns and somber colors of a sick and fearful old man.

In the winter of his life Henry began to seek the ease and quiet of his Privy Chamber and the pleasures of dice and cards, and as the years slipped by a heavy lassitude settled upon him. Yet the fire was not altogether extinguished, and it could flare up without warning. He grew suspicious of those who sought to advise him, suspecting them of self-interested counsel. He scolded his councilors as if they were so many schoolboys for "temporizing for their own profit," assured them that he could well discern "the good servants from the flatterers," and threatened the latter with dire retribution. He detested the sound of whispering for fear that schemes were being

Lord Chancellor Thomas Wriothesley tried hard to avoid royal displeasure, not an easy thing to do when the King told him to arrest the Queen.



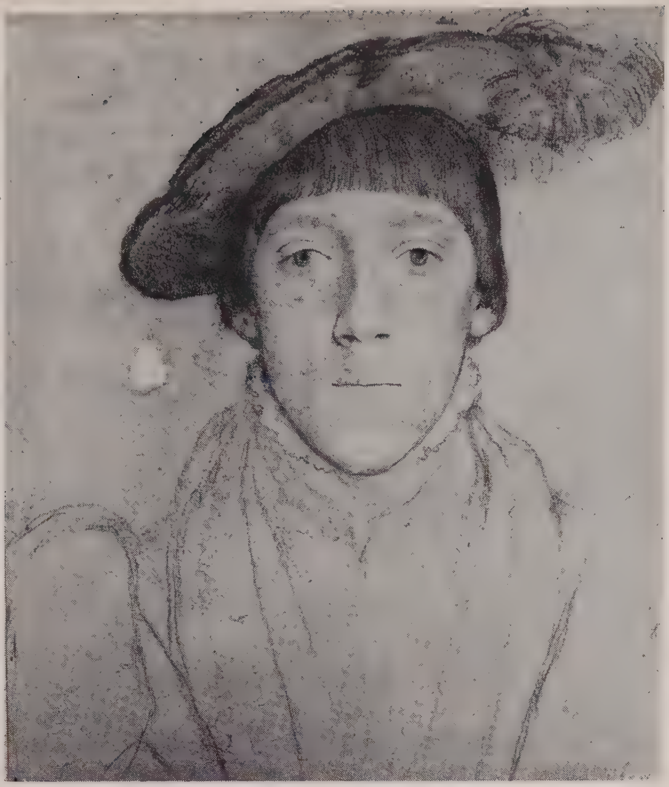
concocted behind his back; and more and more he oscillated between violent suspicion and spells of lethargy during which he left the affairs of state to his councilors and servants. Sick, distrustful, and frightened by the inexorable approach of death, Henry became a monster, the most fearful kind of tyrant—the despot who is secretive, neurotic, and unpredictable. His handling of his sixth and final wife was malicious to the point of psychosis; he shouted uncontrollably at his Lord Chancellor, calling him for all to hear a "knave, yea, arrant knave, beast and fool"; he raged at Bishop Gardiner, branding him a "willful and heady man" and an inveterate troublemaker; and he systematically destroyed the Howards, father and son. Ill and exhausted as he was, in December of 1546 he read every word of the interrogation during Surrey's trial, and pondered how the Earl's "intent" should be judged. He underscored the treasonous words "If the King die, who should have the rule of the Prince but my father or I," and with his own hand he penned the query that ultimately led to the poet's execution—"what it importeth?"

Ever since Henry's death, at the age of fifty-seven, men have asked how a once splendid monarch could come to such a pass. Some historians have suggested that during the last years of the reign he was slowly sinking "into a pustular, syphilitic mass," degenerate of body and soul; other authorities have been content to say that sickness and decrepitude transformed him into a testy and pathetic invalid; and still others have simply recorded in one way or another the diagnosis of the French ambassador who said that Henry was "the most dangerous and cruel man in the world." That the King was ill of body and in constant pain is established fact; that he was moody, pestilent, and petty is undeniable; but nowhere is there real evidence of senility, mental disease, or spiritual degeneration. Instead, the prevailing image of those concluding months is that of a calculating, egotistical, and suspicious man, educated to the maxim "three may keep counsel if two be away." Above all else, Henry was terrified of dying and equated continued life with the absolute control of those about him. No matter what the cost, the King was determined to disprove the age-old prophecy that "old men are out of date . . . their zeal is withered like their brows." Even a Tudor sovereign could not expect to defy time forever, but he could hold youth in ransom by showing his ambitious courtiers that the King's wrath was still death.

Henry had ruled for thirty-seven years, and he believed explicitly that "the rod can no more be spared in schools than the sword in the hand of the prince." As the father and schoolmaster of his people, he knew well that "all order standeth in ruling and obeying." The will to command was the habit of a lifetime, but to succeed in eliciting absolute obedience was not easy. The aging monarch must have appreciated the warning that an old and infirm prince "may be ruled over by a new train of hungry councilors," and the "unthankful people" will be "more inclined to a lusty king, than to an old misguided" relic.

At no time in his career was Henry more dangerous; if he *had* been dying of syphilis (of which there is only the most circumstantial kind of evidence), or slipping slowly into his dotage, it would have been far safer for those who served and counseled him. As it was, he lived and governed as he had always done, by the rule that "fear begets obedience," and he spent his days noting down the actions of his councilors and testing friend and foe alike for the secret malice in their hearts. The King, however, was far too subtle in his handling of men to reveal his mind, for he confessed that "if I thought that my cap knew my counsel, I would cast it into the fire and burn it." Henry was a past master, as Sir Thomas More noted, at making each of his councilors believe that he alone enjoyed his special favor and confidence. Exactly how successful he was in spreading this illusion is witnessed by a report to the Privy Council some days after his death, in which Mr. Secretary Paget assured the lords of the Council that the late King's Majesty "used to open his pleasure to me alone in many things." Yet three pages further on in the same document, Sir Anthony Denny and Sir William Herbert, both gentlemen of the bedchamber, announced that Henry "would always when Mr. Secretary was gone tell us what had passed between them. . . ."

Not only did the King conceal his thoughts from his



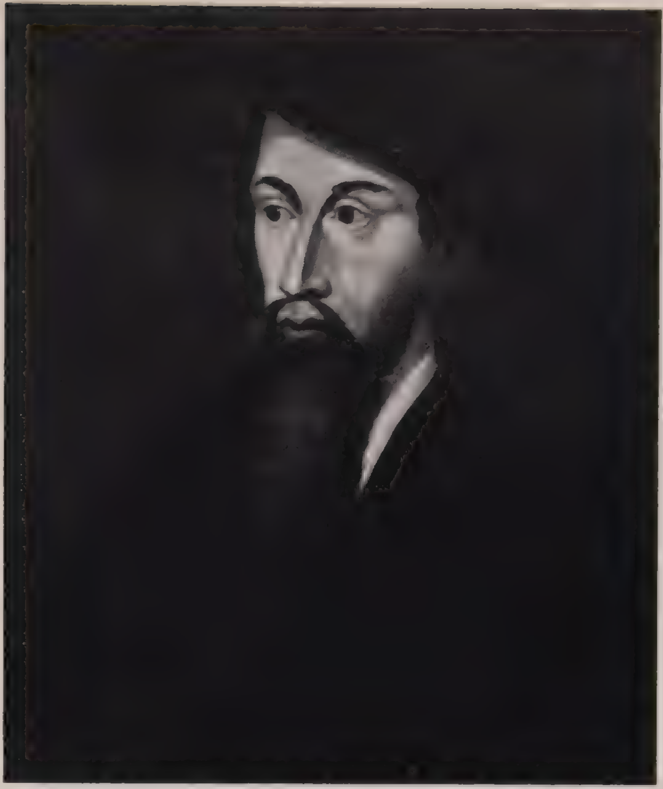
BY GRACIOUS PERMISSION OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

The ambitious young Earl of Surrey lost his head—literally as well as figuratively—when he rashly displayed the royal emblem on his coat of arms.

councilors and tell tales behind their backs, but he also developed a singularly unpleasant device for probing their minds. The King's archbishop, Thomas Cranmer, who probably knew his sovereign better than any man at court, recorded the method. His Majesty, he said, "is wont to hand over" controversial books, particularly on religious subjects, "to one of his lords in waiting for perusal, from whom he may afterwards learn the contents. He then takes them back, and presently gives them to be examined by someone else, of an entirely opposite way of thinking to the former party. Thus, when he has made himself master of their opinions, and sufficiently ascertained both what they commend and what they find fault with, he at length openly declares his own judgment respecting the same point." For excellent reasons, the Archbishop declared his monarch to be an "astute and vigilant observer," but Cranmer seems to have been unaware of the calculated cleverness of the technique: not only did the system save work but it also told Henry exactly where everybody else stood. No man, it was reported, could be "found courageous enough to advise him honestly, to tell him his mind, or to show him the truth." The accusation stems from an unreliable source and is doubtless biased, but it contains an element of truth: Henry found enjoyment in watching his courtiers with a secret eye and in holding in his hands the means of their destruction. Secretary Paget recalled that in the last month of his life Henry said he had a "just and sore matter of old against" the Bishop of Winchester which had never been "taken away by any pardon," and that he intended to use it to discipline that unfortunate ecclesiastic. Then the King ordered Paget to bring him a "certain writing, touching the said Bishop," and commanded his secretary to keep it safe so that he might have it when he called for it. Indeed, Henry boasted that he alone could control such a troublesome servant, and the constant threat of that unknown "writing," waiting to be called for, was certainly one of the means by which a ruthless old man ruled his "willful and contentious" bishop.

There is a story about Henry and his last queen, Catherine Parr, told by the martyrologist John Foxe, which is so extraordinary that it has often been dismissed as a malicious legend, if only because it presents the King as either an absent-minded old fool or a vicious psychopath who delighted in tormenting his wife. As Foxe tells the story, Queen Catherine was "very zealous toward the Gospel" and was careless enough to risk theological discussion as a way of entertaining her aging and difficult spouse. The King's mind had been systematically poisoned by the whispered hints of Bishop Gardiner and Chancellor Wriothesley that the Queen was tainted with heresy. Suspicious of both his wife's religious opinions and the political motives of his councilors, Henry listened to Catherine's disturbing ideas; then he politely ordered her from his chamber, bidding her "Farewell, sweet heart," which Foxe assures us was his usual term for the Queen when giving her license to depart. The moment she was out of hearing, Henry burst into loud indignation and sarcastically said, "A good hearing it is when women become such clerks; and a thing much to my comfort, to come in mine old days to be taught by my wife." On Gardiner's recommendation he then issued a warrant to investigate Catherine's heretical activities and to search her rooms. Should any damning evidence be found, the Queen was to be seized and "carried by night unto the Tower." Foxe defends Henry's consent to such a scheme on the grounds that "like a wise politic prince," he ordered the Queen's arrest "not upon any evil mind or misliking . . . to have her speedy dispatch, but rather closely dissembling with them, to try out the uttermost of Winchester's fetches" and to see how far he and Wriothesley would go.

Shortly before the day of the arrest, Henry disclosed the entire plan to one of his personal physicians, "charging him withal, upon peril of his life, not to utter it to any creature living." Then in proper fairy-tale fashion, the warrant for the Queen's arrest was accidentally dropped and picked up by someone who instantly took it to Catherine. The Queen, not unnaturally, was horrified and promptly "fell incontinent into a great melancholy and agony." On hearing of his wife's state of mind, Henry relented and sent the same physician to whom he had already revealed the plot to attend upon the Queen and comfort her. The doctor's prescription to Catherine seems to have been to hide her heretical books, throw herself



The man who came out on top when Henry finally died was Edward Seymour, Earl of Hertford, who became Lord Protector for the young King Edward VI.

upon the King's mercy, and assure her husband that she had only appeared to differ with him in religion so as to entertain him during the painful time of his infirmity and to profit herself from his greater theological knowledge. Henry, along with almost every other male in the sixteenth century, regarded women as being "weak, frail, impatient, feeble, and foolish" and "void of the spirit of council and regimen." He was consequently pleased by his wife's tactful remarks, and announced that they were again perfect friends. Unfortunately, however, he failed to make this fact known to his Lord Chancellor, and next day, while the royal couple were walking happily in the garden, "suddenly in the midst of their mirth" Chancellor Wriothesley with forty of the King's guards arrived to arrest Catherine and her ladies in waiting. It was on this occasion that Thomas Wriothesley earned his master's anger and the description "knave, beast, and fool." Possibly Henry actually forgot to rescind the order; more likely he enjoyed a scene in which his Chancellor was made to look ridiculous. The tale is doubtless embroidered, and it is filled with contradictions, but Foxe's insistence that the King's purpose was to test and probe his councilors fits the character of a sovereign who delighted in embarrassing his servants, terrifying his wife, and baffling his advisers because it gave him a sense that power and life were still his.

Of all the weapons with which Henry could belabor his councilors, his last will and testament was the most satisfactory. In it he named sixteen absolutely equal councilors to form a council of regency to govern in the name of his young son, who was strictly enjoined never to "change, molest, trouble, nor disquiet" his legally appointed advisers. The usual explanation for this extraordinary document is that it represented Henry's resolution to prevent any wicked uncle or overmighty magnate from usurping his son's throne, and his equally strong determination to rule from the grave. Presumably, by appointing the members of his own council to that of his son's and by giving each man equal authority, he expected to project his own wishes into the future and to forestall the ambitions of anyone who sought to become an *alter rex*. The will has always been a source of considerable embarrassment to historians who have admired Henry as an astute and prudent politician, for as a serious instrument of government the testament is preposterous. Not only does it name no Lord Protector, but it also insists on absolute majority rule and provides no means by which the council could recruit new members, despite the fact that by the terms of the will Edward could not come of age until eighteen and consequently the council would have to rule in his stead for almost a decade. As a realistic basis for sixteenth-century government, it was totally inadequate and utterly out of touch with prevailing political theory—which was authoritarian to the core and required that some councilor be appointed Lord Protector to act as head of state.

The problem of why Henry wrote such a will, foisting off on his son a form of conciliar government almost guaranteed to collapse (as indeed it did within hours of his death), may have had little to do with the King's concern for the future and a great deal to do with his preoccupation with the present. The one thing that Henry dared not do, and was probably psychologically incapable of doing, was to name his son's guardian, for in effect this would be appointing his own successor, and it was a well-tried maxim of the age that the "very day that the heir apparent is published, you may say *Ecce rex alter Angliae*." He could not indicate the man to whom he was willing to bequeath his rule, even though such authority would only have been *in loco parentis*, for fear that scheming sycophants and greedy toadies might sense the direction of the future and plan accordingly. Henry was fully aware of the whispers behind his back, and his answer to all that restless agitation was his last will and testament. It became his instrument of political control, the one weapon with which he could frighten his servants, satisfy his growing irritability, and achieve absolute obedience, all by the simple threat of reading his councilors into or out of the document. With his will he held the future in bondage, like some irascible and opinionated great aunt threatening to disinherit her favorite nieces and nephews.

That the King did in fact deliberately use his will as a cudgel and bribe was perfectly clear in late December of

1546 when he called for the document and proceeded to disinherit Norfolk and Bishop Gardiner. At the time, he was thoroughly alarmed and furious at the Howards, and in a towering rage over Gardiner, who had dared to argue about the transfer of episcopal lands. It seemed like a particularly propitious time for Henry to demonstrate the consequences of planning a future in which he could hold no place and of daring to disobey the King while he still lived. John Foxe describes the episode simply but suggestively: the King was anxious to name some "whom, he said, he meant to have in, and some [who were] in, whom he meant to have out." Moreover, Henry made it painfully clear that anyone who crossed him would also risk disinheritance, for when Sir Anthony Brown suggested that Gardiner's eviction be reconsidered, Henry retorted: "have you not yet done to molest me in this matter? If you will not yet cease to trouble me, by the faith I owe unto God, I will surely dispatch thee out of my will also; and therefore let us hear no more of this matter."

Henry was obviously determined to punish his "willful and heady" bishop, but Gardiner's opponents received little comfort, for there is evidence to indicate that after revising his will the King refused to sign it, thereby leaving everybody in a dither of apprehension. A sword of Damocles hung over the heads of those named in the testament as well as those omitted, for until the document was signed it had no legal validity. In the end the old King seems to have waited too long, for death when it came caught Henry unprepared, and his will had to be signed by dry stamp at the order of councilors confronted with an extremely embarrassing situation. The rulers of the new reign—those "entirely beloved councilors" named to the council of regency—derived their legal standing from the will. Should the King die intestate, their position and that of the future reign might be placed in doubt. In the face of such a crisis Hertford, Paget, and Wriothesley sanctioned the signing of their sovereign's will by dry stamp, technically a forgery but better than no signature at all. Though the King's failure to sign his will discomfited his advisers, Henry had achieved his purpose—as he said, "I do not choose anyone to have it in his power to command me, nor will I ever suffer it."

On January 28, 1547, death ended a long-drawn-out battle; the King slowly retreated before the triple threat of old age, overweight, and overindulgence, until he slipped from exhausted suffering into coma and finally death. The concluding scene, as the immense body breathed its last, is not clear. Some authorities picture a degenerate monarch tortured upon the rack of conscience, struggling in a "bloody rage" against the panic of death and the fear of divine retribution, defiantly calling for a "bowl of white wine," and at the last crying out in agony: "All is lost!" Others describe a gentler and more peaceful scene in which the determined old man spurned the ritual of the ancient church and chose to face his maker alone, for such was his colossal egotism that he claimed God as his ally rather than his master and presented his soul to heaven in the sublime conviction that God and his conscience were in perfect accord. John Foxe has preserved a mixed account—of a king "loath to hear any mention of death," of physicians in dread of informing him that even a king must die, and of a man who at the end quietly told those about him that he would "take a little sleep" and slipped painlessly from partial coma into oblivion.

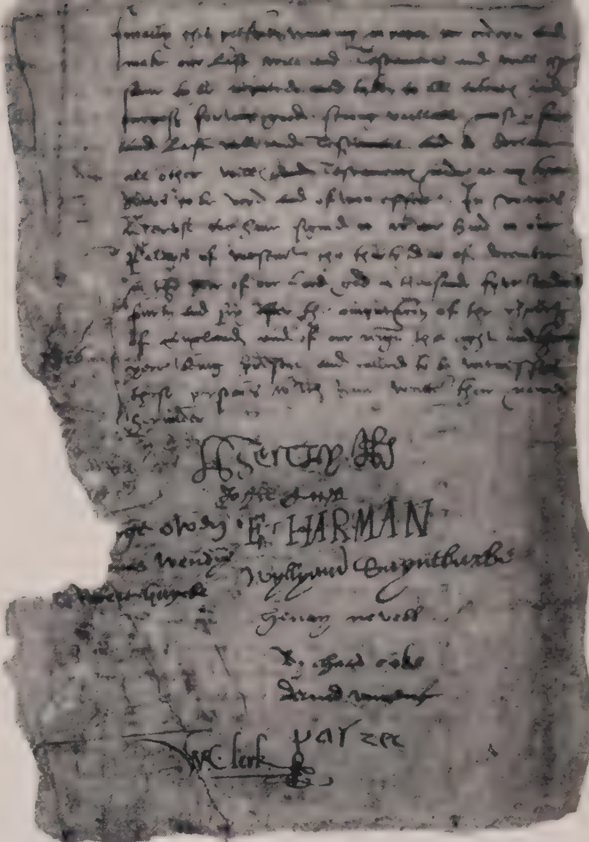
The reign that followed spoke fulsomely of its devotion to the "king that dead is," but it paid scant heed to his most dire pronouncements, and neither his son nor his daughters could ever spare the money to build the magnificent monument to his body which he had so earnestly requested in his final testament. Even as Henry lay dying, Sir William Paget and the Earl of Hertford held soft-spoken conversations at the door of the privy chamber and quietly arranged for the Earl to assume the mantle of the old King's authority as Lord Protector of the Realm. Everyone from the children of the scullery and the grooms of the stable to the clerks of the Greencloth and the councilors of state were deeply concerned as to the outcome of those whispered words outside the King's chamber, for the stakes were immeasurably high. Never before in thirty-seven years had there been such an occasion for a political clean sweep; the man who spoke for the child king could grasp for himself unheard-of riches, reward his cohorts, avenge himself on his enemies, and control the destiny of every member of the court.

With Henry's death the months of cautious maneuvering and secret negotiations paid off, and Hertford was pronounced Lord Protector and Governor of the King's Body. Within a fortnight the royal household began to experience the impact of new management. In a series of tantalizingly short notes the Lord Protector made it clear that there was a new head of state. Both minion and master searched for their names on the list "of such officers in ordinary of the Chamber of the late King's Majesty as were discharged," and some may have regained hope from the often used phrase, "so many of these [named] as the Lord Protector will reappoint." The yeomen of the chamber were confronted with the statement: "the number of 50 that shall remain after an hundred chosen out to be discharged." In other words, two out of every three yeomen lost their posts as a consequence of Henry's death, and their future jobs depended upon the goodwill of the King's uncle, who now boasted the dignity of Duke of Somerset as well as the title of Lord Protector.

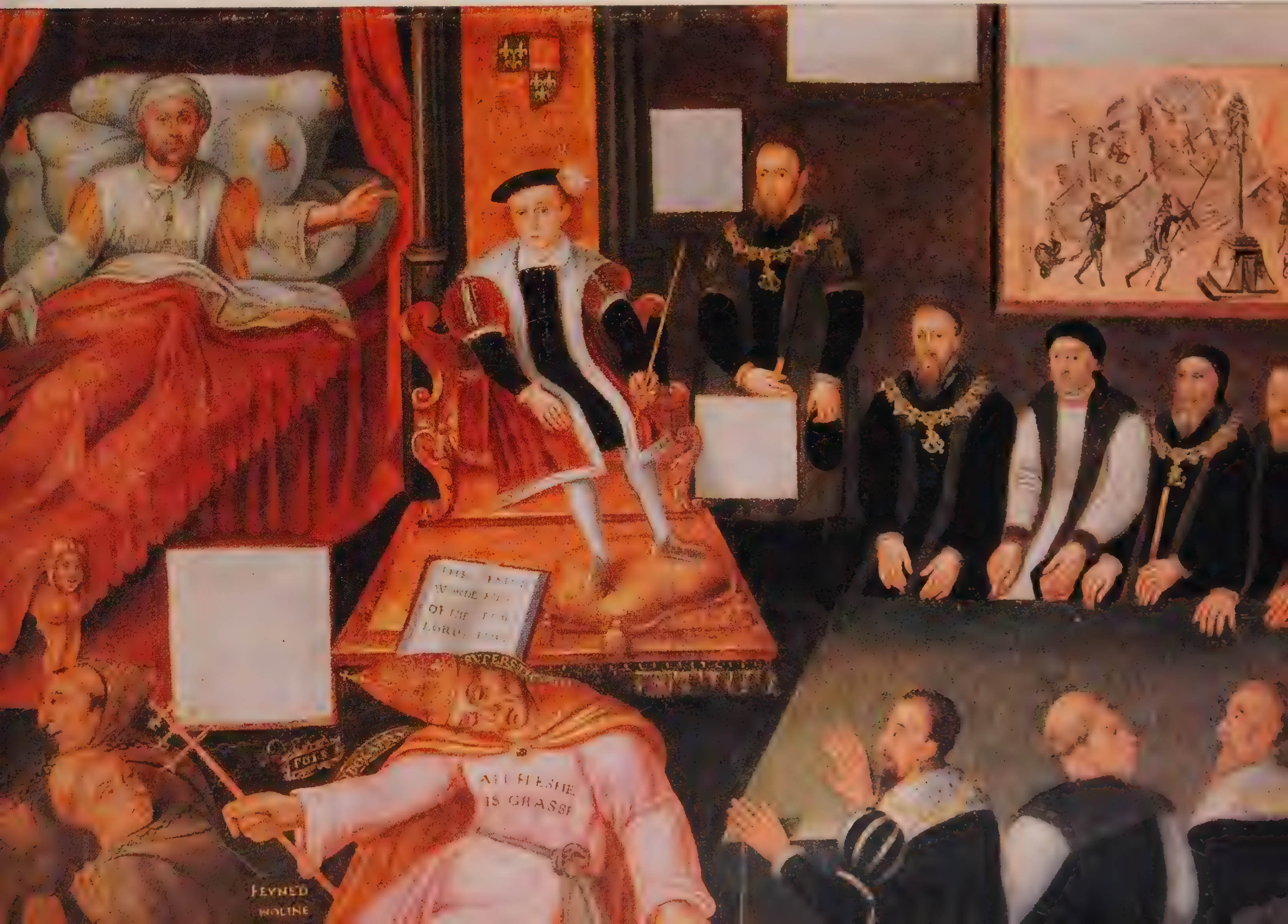
The new regime was doubtless a disappointment to the discharged ranks of the yeomen of the chamber, but to most people it came as a welcome relief, for Edward Seymour chose to rule in the name of sweet reason and soft mercy. Henry's brutal heresy and treason laws were repealed; in their place, unfortunately, came not domestic concord and religious brotherhood but government corruption, civil disobedience, theological strife, and political bankruptcy. By the time Hertford was overthrown in the palace revolution of 1549, many Englishmen had begun to wonder whether the Draconian decrees and belly wisdom of the old King—terrible and ruthless as they had been—were not in the end more merciful than the kindly ineptitude of the Lord Protector.

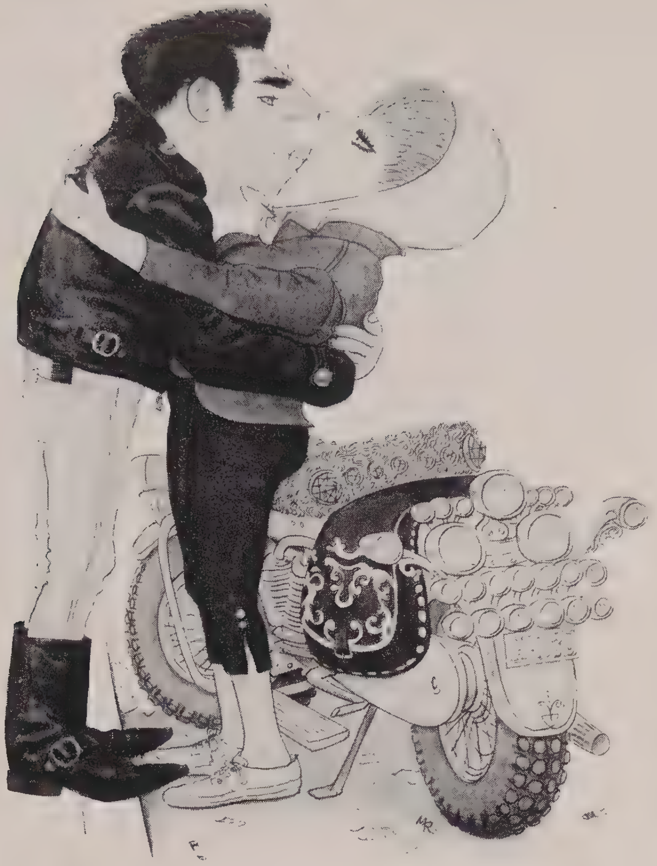
Whatever may be said either in defense or condemnation of King Hal's methods of government, or the consequences of his rule, there is only one adequate description of him in later life, and that is the one given by the French ambassador in 1538. "He is a wonderful man and has wonderful people about him: but he is an old fox and proud." The "old Fox" was gone, and his departure cleared the air of sickness, terror, and uncertainty. Mercifully his "wonderful people" could not foresee the future; all they knew was that the King was dead, and they could now shout "Long live the King."

Lacey Baldwin Smith, a professor of history at Northwestern University, has written extensively about Renaissance England. His book on the Elizabethan Age will be published next year by the book division of Horizon.



Henry's signature was stamped upon his will (above). The painting below—equally inauthentic—shows the dying King aiding Protestantism and confounding the pope by naming Seymour Protector.

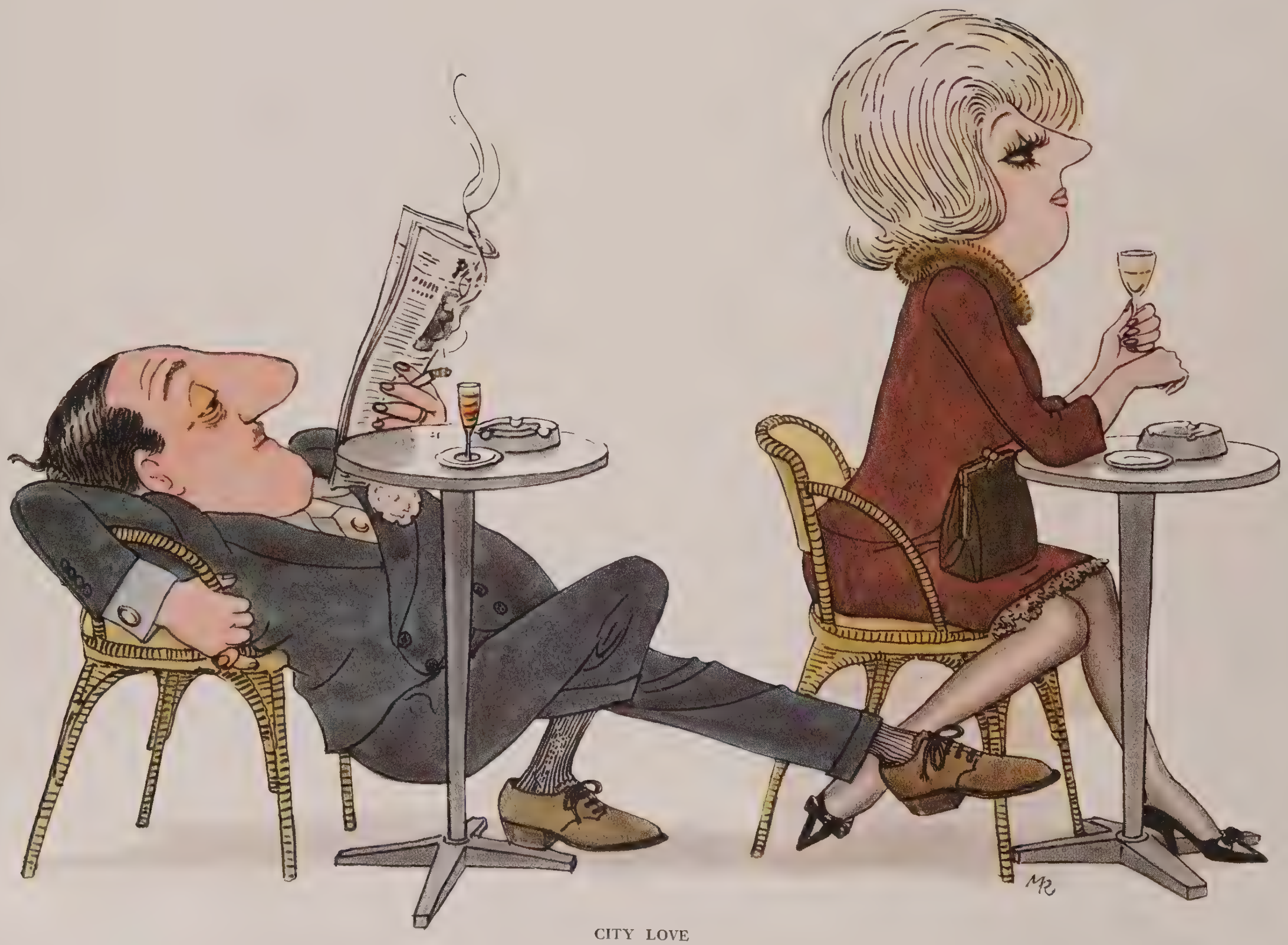




TEEN LOVE

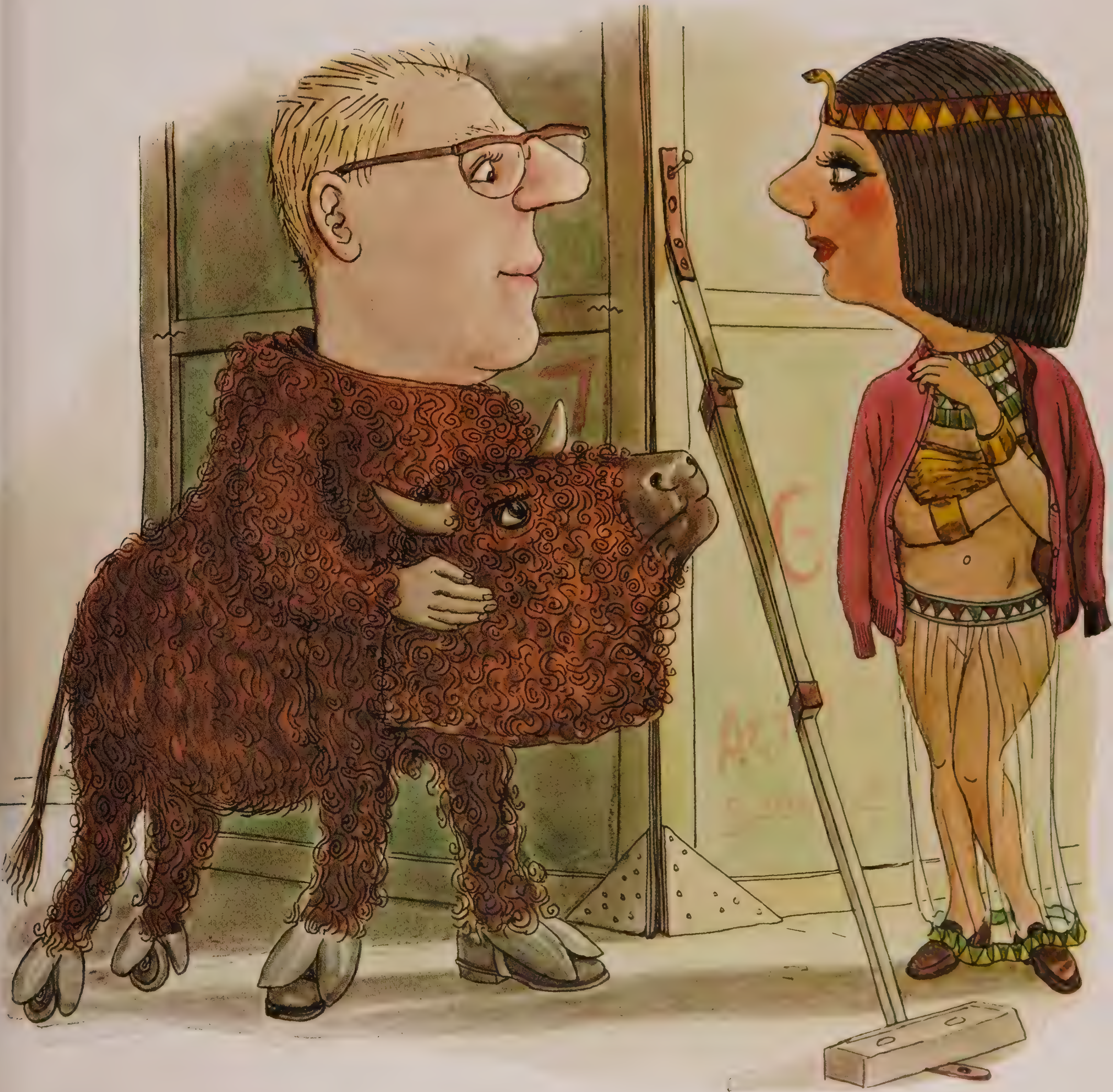
Lovers, as we all know, often get carried away by their emotions. For love, as The Song of Solomon points out, is as strong as death. "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it." King Solomon, who serenaded a sweetheart with these verses, had at his disposal threescore wives, fourscore concubines, and virgins without number; yet even he still found time to fall in love. Over the centuries, society has made determined efforts to stamp out the curious obsession, yet love has never ceased to enthrall. Indeed, our own age can boast that it is as rich in great lovers as the past ever was; we still have our fair share of Solomons and Abelards, Cleopatras and Juliets. A number of them have been caught in the full flush of their rapture by the American artist Michael Ramus, who has recorded for posterity some of the forms the undying passion takes in our day.

Drawings by MICHAEL RAMUS

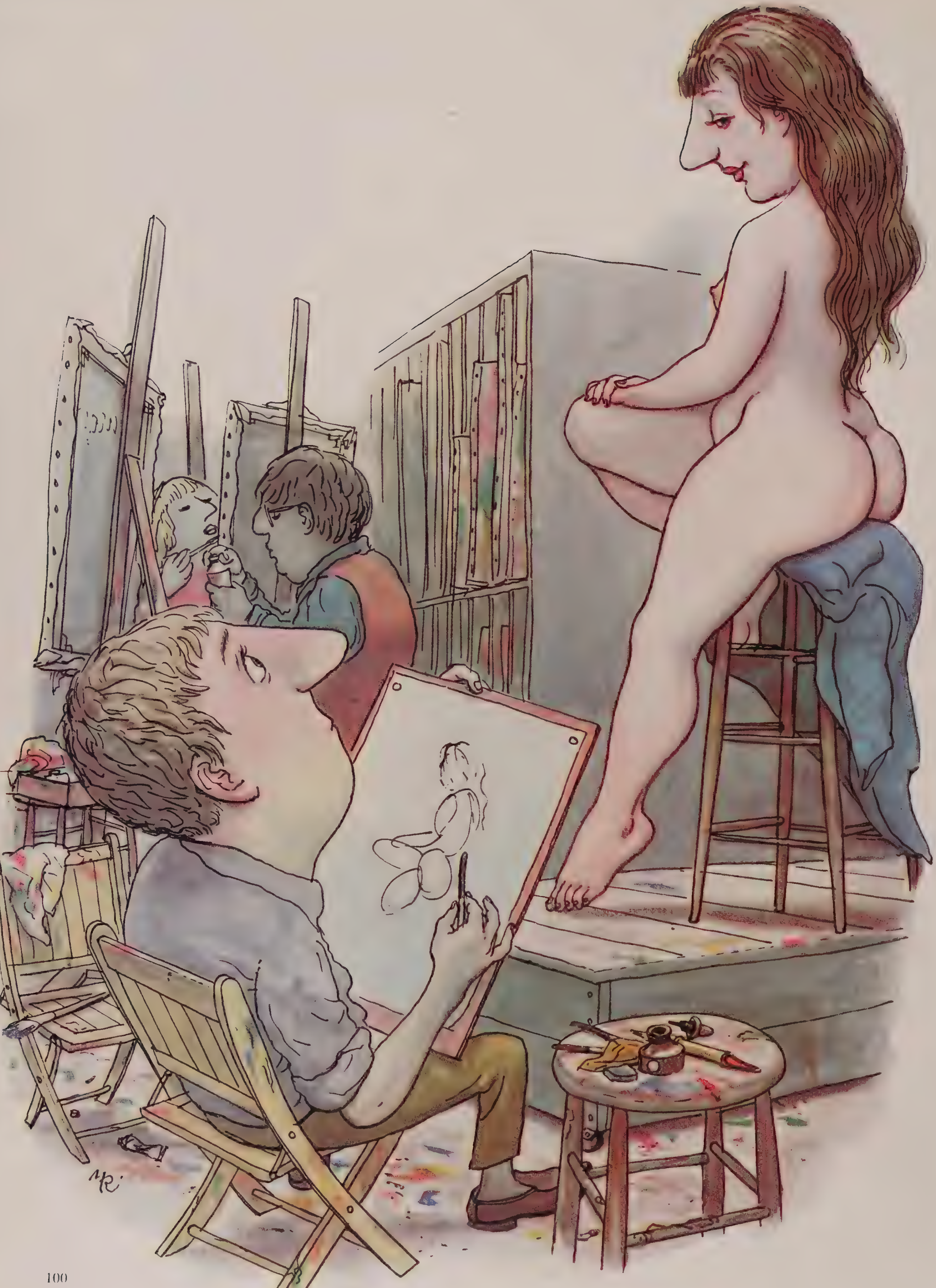


CITY LOVE

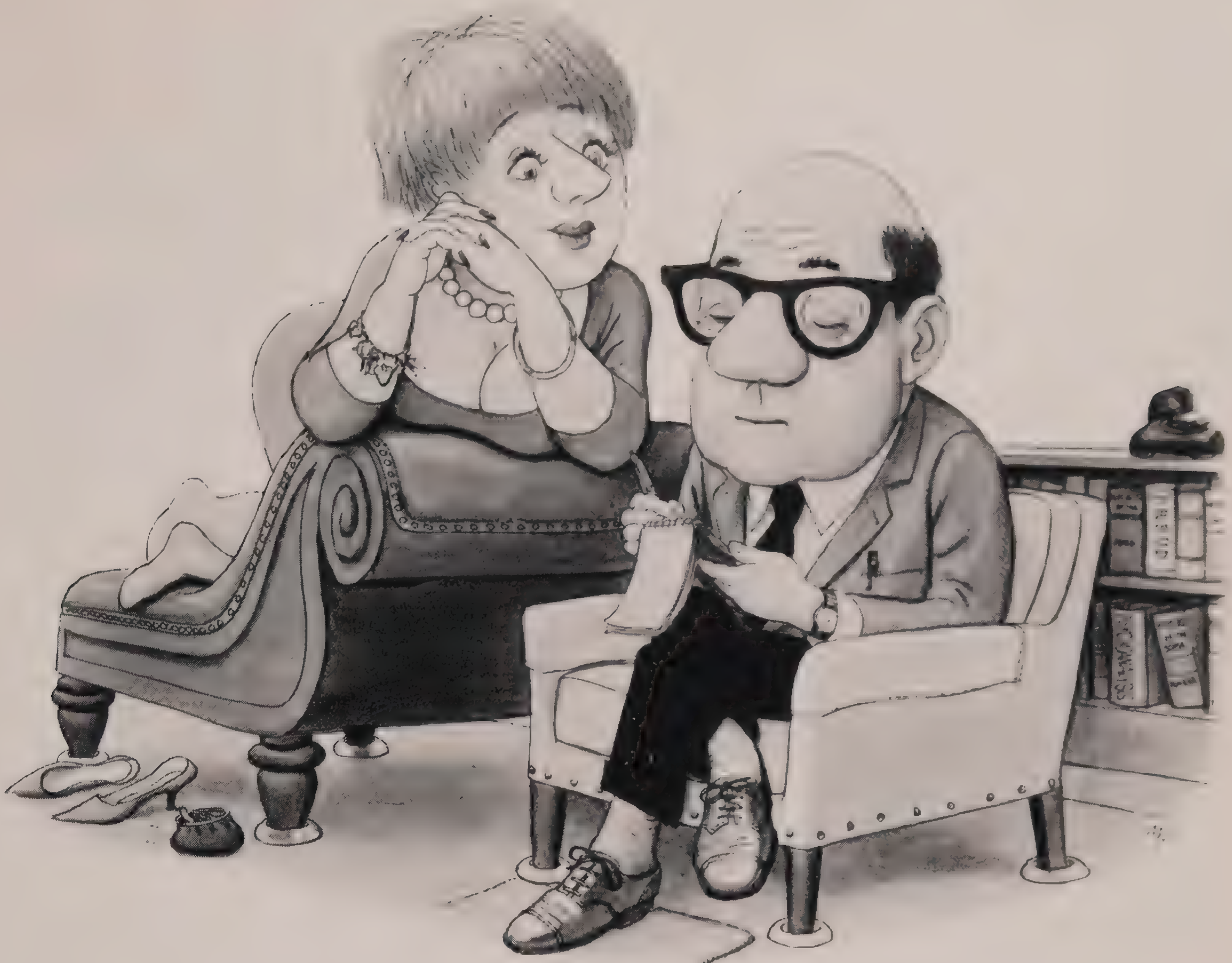
Variations on a Four-Letter Word



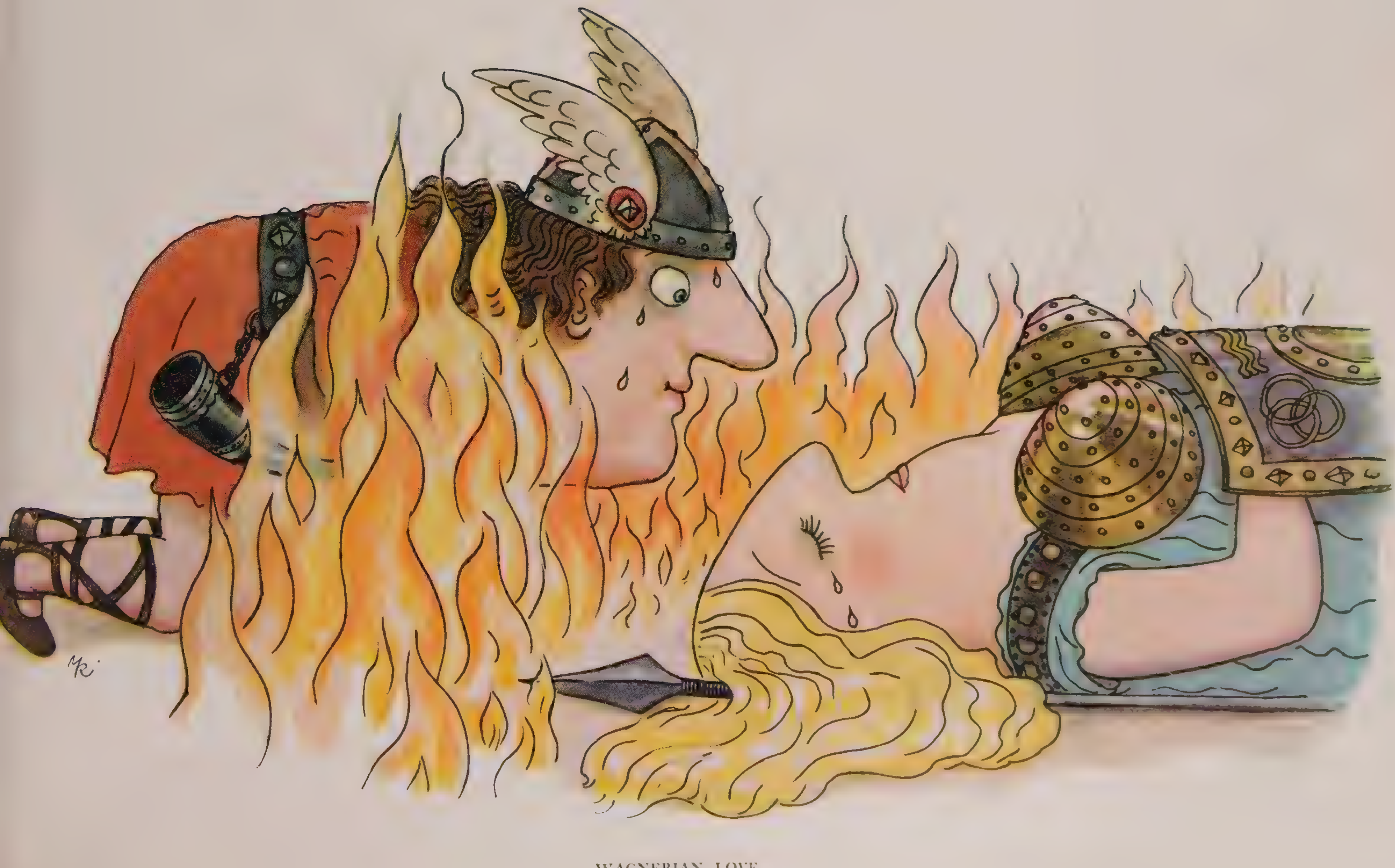
THEATRICAL LOVE



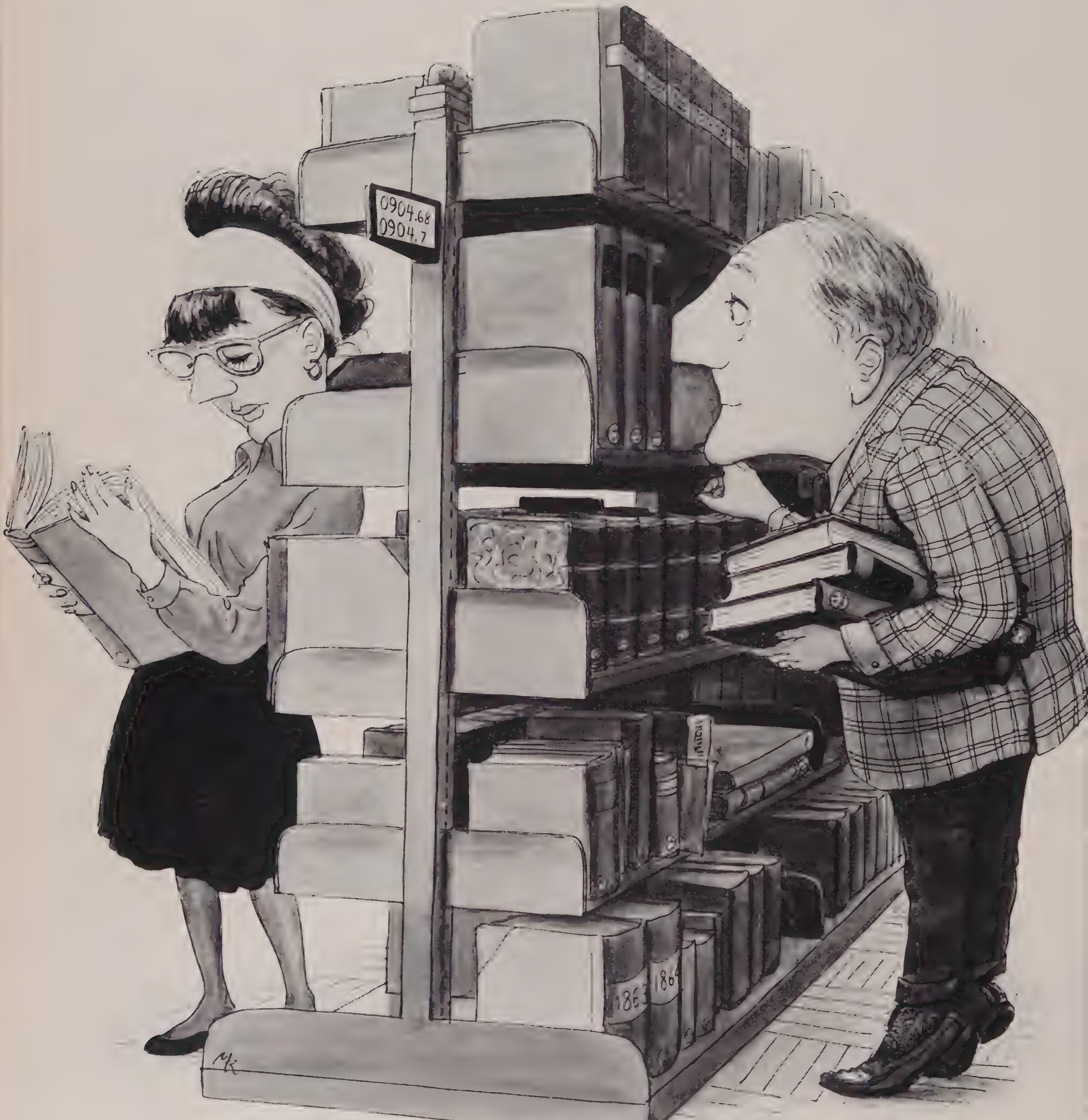
ARTISTIC LOVE



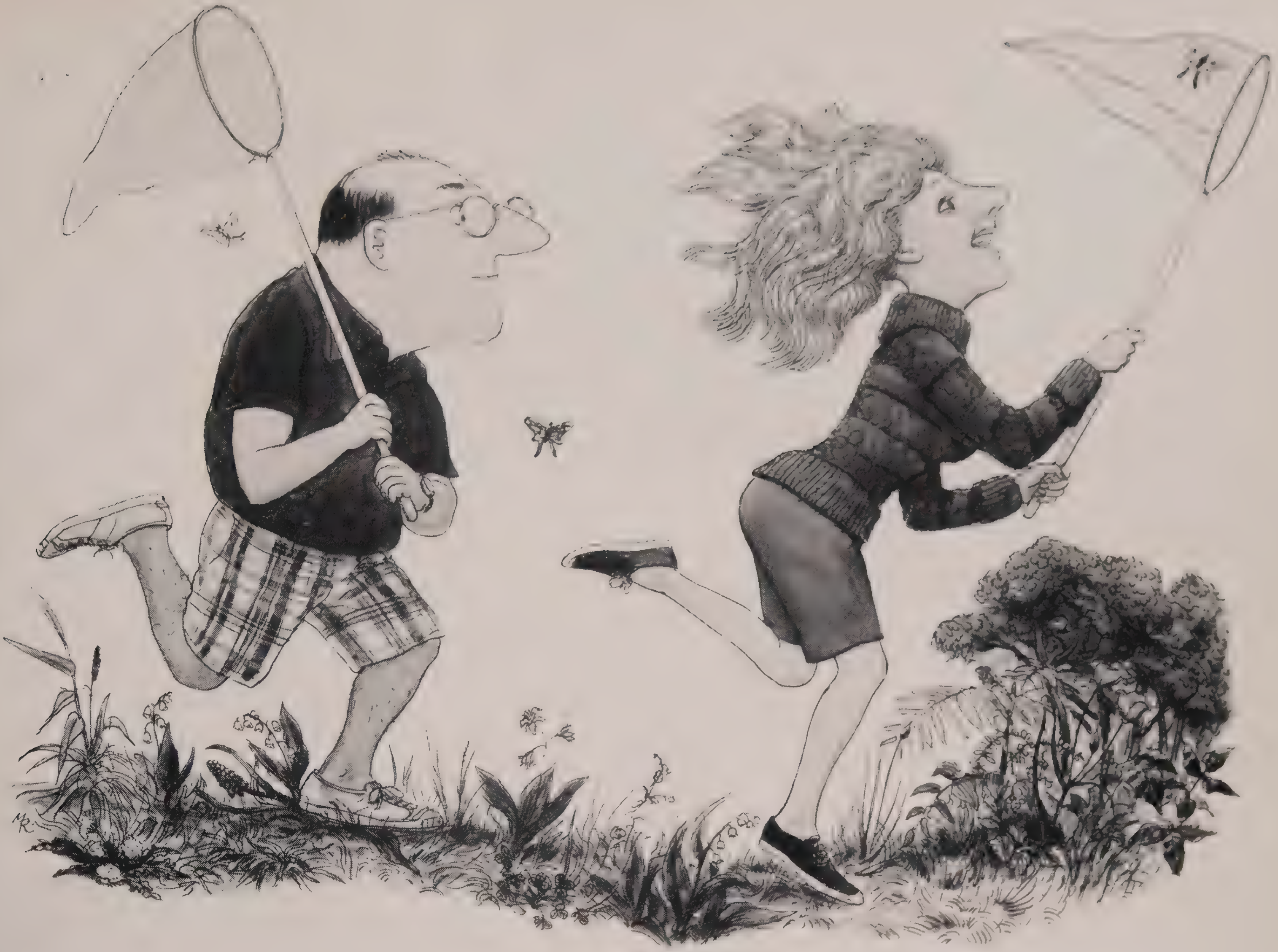
NEUROTIC LOVE



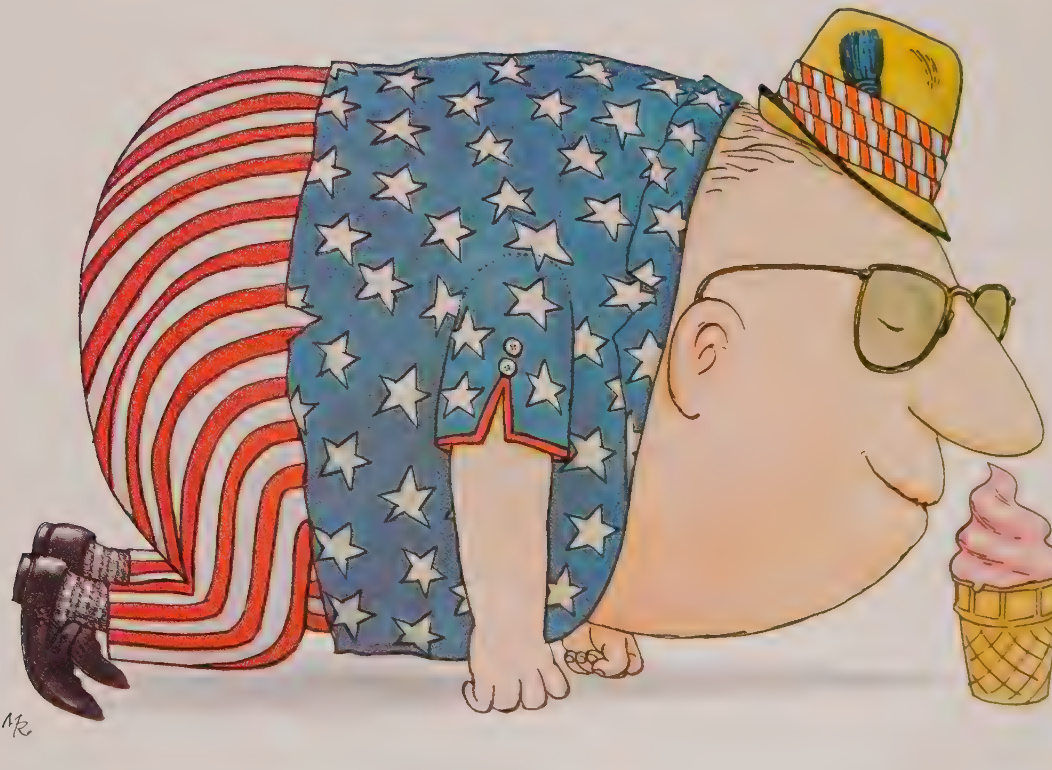
WAGNERIAN LOVE


0904.68
0904.7
1863
1864

LIBRARY LOVE



COUNTRY LOVE



PURE LOVE

In her passionate love poems she said exactly what she meant—which scandalized some readers but said it so well that the Greeks considered her their greatest lyric poet

In Search of SAPPHO

By PETER GREEN

In antiquity men spoke of her as the tenth Muse. Today she remains one of the most famous lyric poets the world has ever known, a name to be ranked with Heine or Villon or Burns, a flame, a legend. Yet, paradoxically, we possess a mere fraction of her work; and though the reputation she enjoys derives to a considerable extent from her personal legend, we in fact know rather less about Sappho than we do about Shakespeare—another great collector of romantic or cranky adherents. It is generally agreed that Sappho's life covered the end of the seventh century B.C. and the beginning of the sixth; that she was an aristocrat, and involved in political activities which led to her being twice exiled from her home town of Mytilene; that she married a rich merchant from Andros, and bore him a daughter whom she named after her own mother; that she wrote lyric poetry, and was the center of some kind of group or association of women. She had two brothers, possibly three, of whom the youngest, a good-looking boy, served as cupbearer in Mytilene's city hall, while the eldest incurred his sister's public displeasure by attempting to marry a courtesan he had picked up during a trading trip to the Egyptian Delta. (He must have been about fifty at the time.) We can deduce with reasonable certainty that she was born in 618 B.C., the year of Alyattes's accession to the throne of Lydia; that her father died when she was six; and that she herself was still alive—though not for long—after 570. All else has been overlaid with endless strata of legend—modern no less than ancient—and obscured by the dust of furious polemic.

I knew, when I decided to write a novel about Sappho,* that the task of researching her life was bound to present difficult problems, among which unacknowledged emotional prejudice would rank very high. Some historical characters seem to invite special pleading almost by definition. Many a hallowed truth—such as the pretty story that Sappho ran a kind of finishing school for young ladies—turned out on investigation to be mere professorial wishful thinking. Even the most sensible of her modern critics can speak of the "copious but inane biographical tradition." If comic poets of the Hellenistic era caricatured Sappho as an omnivorous nymphomaniac, a randy figure of fun, her modern supporters have clearly gone to the other extreme. *Their* Sappho comes through as a cross between Hypatia and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Which interpretation, I wonder, would Sappho herself have resented more?

Perhaps because of all this, my own quest for Sappho began in a context where the human element intruded as little as possible—with the mood and physical landscape of the place where all but a few years of her life were spent, the island of Lesbos. The very name Lesbos is a constant, nudging reminder of the one thing about her that everybody, literary or not, can be relied upon to know. (It also, I imagine, provides the local tourist board with a nice problem in conflicting loyalties.) Slowly, as the seasons passed and I explored the island's richly varied scenery—Eresos in the southwest, Sappho's traditional birthplace, with its high, crouching headlands; the great mountain gorges of the northern coast; the cornlands and glittering salt flats of the inland gulf, where wild horses still roam—I came to see how little its

---

**The Laughter of Aphrodite*, which was published in January by Doubleday

The beach at Eressos, on Lesbos, where Sappho supposedly spent her youth essential features must have changed since Sappho's lifetime, and how a puzzling phrase in her poetry could often be explained or enhanced by the living world around me. The commentator in his study might make heavy weather of a "rosy-fingered moon" after sunset, but the phrase would come as no surprise—rather with a delighted stab of recognition—to any islander.

The same is true of the simple, everyday things which require no explanation, but which touch one strangely when seen in this place and no other, because they recall the unforgettable words—that lilting rhythm, those broad Aeolic vowels, the at times outlandish dialect—which *she* had used to describe them: a grape hyacinth carelessly trodden into the furrow; a peasant balanced on two rickety chairs, reaching up through the branches of his gnarled apple tree; spring water, crystal-clear, tumbling down a miraculously lush hillside among beech and plane and rowan. Sappho's eye for natural phenomena was extraordinarily accurate—which tells us something valuable about Sappho herself. That "downrushing wind" which shook the oaks in her day is no stranger, in October or February, to the modern islander; and anyone who has heard the *meltemi* roaring through the great forests above Aghiassos will hardly underestimate the force of Sappho's simile for the passion that racks her trembling limbs.

Sooner or later, though, the human element, the fog of preconception and prejudice, has to be met and faced. Mytilene itself is a good point of departure in this respect. The municipal authorities have by no means forgotten their famous poetess. One of the largest and newest hotels bears her name. The latest English-language guide devotes much space to proving that she had the manners, morals, and outlook of a Greek Orthodox schoolmistress—and then rather spoils the effect by printing some admirable translations of her poems. Two public monuments have been erected in her honor. The older is small, inaccessible, and inoffensive. Lately, however, a new white marble statue—the gift, it appears, of a ladies' group known as the Friends of Sappho—has been sited, somewhat bizarrely, on a tall plinth in the middle of the main public parking lot. It resembles nothing so much as a hefty but high-minded gym instructress, and I can never pass it without remembering Sappho's own remark about those she had done good to being the ones who did her the greatest wrong in return.

So assertive a monument unavoidably poses the question: what, in fact, did the historical Sappho look like? (This may be regarded as a question of more immediate concern to the novelist than to the historian, which perhaps explains why I examined, qua novelist, many things I could easily have ignored were I writing a scholarly monograph—and raises some interesting questions about the tacit conventions governing historiography.) In

BIBLIOTHEQUE NATIONALE—SERVICE PHOTOGRAPHIQUE

A fifth-century B.C. *coin from Mytilene may depict the poet* this case I had two almost insuperable factors operating against me. To begin with, the realistic portrait as we know it is a phenomenon which, we are told, scarcely antedates the fourth century B.C. Therefore, since Sappho died in all likelihood between 570 and 565 B.C., the chances of finding any gem, bust, or relief that will show us her individual features are virtually nil.

On top of this we are hampered by chronic lack of material. Though something like fifty statues or busts have been hopefully identified as Sappho by various modern pundits, on grounds ranging from the flimsy to the risible, there is not one (unless we count a late and blatant forgery) which has survived bearing Sappho's name. Nor, it seems, were there many in antiquity. Indeed, we hear of only two—a statue still standing in the Zeuxippus gymnasium at Constantinople, from about 500 A.D., and a fourth-century Hellenistic bronze by Silanion, which Verres looted from Syracuse during his notorious term as Roman governor of Sicily (and which, incidentally, lends some circumstantial support to the tradition that Syracuse was the place of Sappho's second exile). Paintings are even rarer: there is only one on record.

Other surviving representations include some stylized fifth-century B.C. vase paintings, a series of coin portraits, and a few engraved seals; the negative verdict of that great authority Sir John Beazley—"No bronze, marble, or gem has the slightest claim to represent her"—seems final. And yet I find myself obstinately doubting it. There is a series of electrum coins, issued on Lesbos between the middle of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. (and obviously the inspiration for later busts that purport to be of Sappho) which show a striking and by no means conventionally attractive woman's face; strong-nosed, fleshy, with a heavy neck and high cheekbones, the hair bound back in a curious kerchief such as peasant women from the outlying villages of Lesbos still occasionally wear. These features have a decidedly Asiatic cast to them—interesting, when we remember the tradition (confirmed by her father's name, Scamandronymus) which connects Sappho's family with the Troad. I know at least one woman today, in Methymna, who could have modeled for that coining die; and she also—the coincidence is at least worth noting—comes of Anatolian stock. Later coins, of Hellenistic and Roman times, progressively prettify this portrait into a conventional mold. Perhaps we can say no more than that the early coins depicted a typical woman of Lesbos, although one ancient commentator, Pollux, in his *Onomasticon*, clearly asserts that the Mytilenaeans put Sappho's head on their coinage.

The literary evidence for her appearance is surprisingly consistent. From the rubbish heaps of Oxyrhynchus (that Egyptian town which has also yielded up so many tantalizing fragments of her poetry) comes a papyrus with this uncompromising biographical statement: "In appearance she seems to have been quite unremarkable, indeed more than usually plain, being swarthy complexioned and of diminutive stature." Small and dark—these are the recurring epithets in Ovid, and in the writings of the second-century A.D. scholar Maximus of Tyre. An anonymous critic, in Roman times, develops the picture with an unforgettable image: "Physically," he observes, "Sappho was very ill-favored, being small and dark in appearance, like a nightingale with misshapen wings folded over a tiny body." We have no grounds for assuming—as has sometimes been done—that all these statements derive from one unreliable source and thus are to be disregarded. For me this Sappho is the beginning of a psychologically credible woman, as far removed as can be from the legend. To fill in the picture we must turn to her own surviving work.

Of Sappho's poetry—the ultimate source for any understanding of her—less than a twentieth part survives: excerpted phrases preserved by grammarians to illustrate curious words or usages; torn, semi-legible papyrus scraps sifted with infinite care from the sands of Egypt. Ezra Pound's tiny, enigmatic poem—"Spring . . . / Too long . . . / Gongula . . ."—is, in fact, one such fragment translated, and is typical in its elusive glimpse of a poem, a relationship, a world which we can never hope to recover whole and entire. Although some of the papyrus fragments, it is clear, have comparatively little missing, only one out of all of Sappho's poems survives intact.

When were they lost? Sappho was sung in Cicero's day, and Horace knew her work almost by heart. We find references to the poems during the first three centuries of our era. Then the trail becomes much less clear, though grammarians continue to excerpt the poems till the eleventh century. We may make allowances for the decadence of learning, not to mention Sappho's outlandish dialect; but what evidence there is suggests—as we might expect—that Sappho's poems were destroyed by the Church. Already in the second century, the Christian apologist Tatian was fulminating against her lewd passions. The first public burning of her poems seems to have taken place toward the end of the fourth century, in the time of Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, who used her works (a kind of supreme insult) as palimpsests for his own pious but enervating homilies. Both the Eastern and the Western churches were involved: there is a tradition that the final and irrevocable bonfires (which lost us most of Alcman, Alcaeus, Erinna, Mimnermus, and Bion, as well as Sappho) took place at Constantinople and Rome in 1073, during Gregory VII's papacy. Those who fervently uphold Sappho's moral purity as a poet must find it a little hard that the same Church which twice com-

A third-century A.D. *papyrus is the only text we have of Sappho's poem "The Wedding of Andromache."*

FROM *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* BY GRENFELL AND HUNT

mitted her works to the flames had, apparently, no objection to Martial's epigrams, with their cold, perverted obscenities.

But the Puritan mind (as psychologists are well aware) tends to be far more inflamed by open, candid, happy—and, above all, *guiltless*—passion than by even the nastiest sort of arcane filth (which at times, indeed, it seems actually to encourage); and Sappho's very spontaneity, her wholly untroubled and unself-conscious lack of reticence alone would suffice to explain why her poetry was singled out for destruction. "Would that our night could have lasted twice as long." There is no hint here that the flesh is inherently sinful, no self-torment except over unrequited passion. As Andrew Burn so wisely observes in *The Lyric Age of Greece*: "To read into the personal sentiments, then being expressed for the first time, the feelings of guilt that would have been inevitable later is anachronistic. The absence of *shame* is a characteristic of Sappho, for which classical Greek moralists were the first to blame her. It was a situation that could only occur once."

It was indeed. Sappho's lifetime spans one of the most fascinating periods in all Greek history, an age of transition—political, ethical, cultural—with a failing aristocratic ideal still stubbornly entrenched against the rising flood of mercantilism. It was also, curiously, an age in which *individuals* flourished, a strange interlude between the collectivisms of Homer and the later city-state. We do not find such emphasis on private life and personal preoccupations again until the Hellenistic period.

An indifference—despite the fact of her political exile—to public affairs, a preoccupation with her own emotional life rather than with the life of the community at large, are the most characteristic qualities in Sappho's work. The nearest she comes to a formal position vis-à-vis her society is with the epithalamiums, or wedding songs, which form a smaller proportion of her work than is often supposed. (The title of J. D. Salinger's *Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters* comes from a particularly vigorous, not to say jolly, example.) But the overwhelming majority of these poems and fragments are concerned, in one way or another, with Sappho's own *crises de coeur*, which—even on the 5 per cent sampling available—seem to have been about as varied and numerous as those of Colette. When Sappho introduces mythical themes, it is nearly always as a gloss on some current private relationship: the story of Helen, for instance, is only used to illustrate Sappho's passion for Anactoria (see "Some Say a Host," opposite). The same is true for politics: the internecine upheavals which convulsed Mytilene during Sappho's lifetime get barely more notice than do the Napoleonic Wars in the novels of Jane Austen—and when they do appear, they are only there as a background to complaints of poverty. Even her justly famous ode to Aphrodite ("Throned in Splendor," opposite) is not quite the solemn invocation it is too often made to appear.

It was Professor Denys Page, in *Sappho and Alcaeus* (by several lengths the best modern study known to me), who pointed out with exemplary common sense that the Goddess is described in the ode as smiling, not because archaic images always do smile, or even by way of greeting, but because she is *amused*. Nor is the reason far to seek. Sappho has got herself into an emotional tangle once more and, as usual, is appealing to Aphrodite to sort it out. Professor Page paraphrases the Goddess's speech as follows: "Why do you keep calling me? Who is it this time, Sappho? It has all happened so often before, and the end has always been the same. Today it is you who love and she who is reluctant; tomorrow it will be she who chases, you who run. So inconstant is your passion, so transient your suffering."

Now this is by no means the Sappho of the popular legend: the high-minded teacher, the grave cult priestess, a kind of early Isadora Duncan, twanging her lyre in a ladylike manner and encircled by yearning late-Victorian girl sophomores. To leave the erotic problem on one side for a moment, anyone capable of writing such a poem as the Aphrodite ode must have two rare and welcome qualities: a capacity for detached self-criticism and a devastating sense of humor, rather akin to Dorothy Parker's. Even in the depths of her hopeless passion Sappho can stand aside and see how funny it all is, how ludicrously predictable her behavior. Yet the passion remains real, life is no less intractable for being comic: we laugh wryly, but we are hurt all the same. And though Sappho mocks herself, she does not mock the Goddess, and may well have believed, literally, in the epiphanies which she describes. This is the loving familiarity that can only spring from deep devotion, a phenomenon better known to us in its medieval context. It is not so far a cry from the Aphrodite ode to Chesterton's splendid aphorism: "God has a sense of humor, and Christ our Lord is full exceeding merry."

But there are more sides than one to a passionate personality, and Sappho has no hesitation about revealing her less dignified characteristics; indeed, one sometimes gets the impression that her whole life was carried on in public. Nothing is too intimate to supply the spark for another poem. She suffers, openly, from humiliating fits of jealousy. Sometimes she wishes she were dead. When roused, she can be waspishly vituperative, writing tart moral tracts to her brother in Egypt and lambasting her own rivals in love with icy contempt. "Fancy falling for some countrified hoyden who can't even arrange her dirty skirt round her ankles properly!" she snaps. Andromeda, we learn from another fragment, will soon be known as Gorgo's wife. Gorgo, it hardly

Some Fragments from Sappho

Throned in Splendor *(tr. Peter Green)*

Throned in splendor, immortal Aphrodite,
Daughter of Zeus, enchantress, I beseech you,
Do not let my heart be crushed by anguish,
Lady, and torment:

But hither come now, if in time past you ever
Heard my cry from afar, and marked my plight and
Quick-responsive, leaving your Father's mansion,
Yoked up your golden

Chariot, and came: ah, lovely and swift the sparrows
Bearing you down from heaven, a whir of wings, down
Through the mid-realm of air, above the darkling
Realm of this earth, and

Here in a flash! Then you, Lady most blessed,
Smiling with your immortal face upon me
Asked, what was my trouble now, why had I
Now called upon you,

What new object had my unruly passions
Fastened on this time—"Whom must I now persuade to
Share your affections? Which of them is it now, my
Sappho, that wrongs you?

"Soon, too soon, your quarry will be your huntress,
Lavishing gifts where now she scorns to take them,
Cold indifference turned overnight to irre-
sistible passion."

Come to me now as then, grant me release from
Burdensome worries: all that my heart most yearns for
Bring to fulfillment, and yourself beside me
Stand as an ally.

Parting *(tr. C. M. Bowra)**

Truly I want to die.
Such was her weeping when she said Good-bye.

These words she said to me:
"What sad calamity!
Sappho, I leave you most unwillingly!"

To her I made reply:
"Go with good heart, but try
Not to forget our love in days gone by.

"Else let me call to mind,
If your heart proves unkind,
The soft delightful ways you leave behind.

"Many a coronet
Of rose and violet,
Crocus and dill upon your brow you set:

"Many a necklace too
Round your soft throat you threw,
Woven with me from buds of ravishing hue,

"And often balm you spread
Of myrrh upon my head,
And royal ointment on my hair you shed."

Some Say a Host *(tr. Peter Green with conjectural emendations)*

Some say a host of cavalry, others of guardsmen,
And some a fleet, is the finest sight of any
On the dark earth; but I declare the best is
What you love wholly.

Easy enough to make men understand this
Truth the world over: she who so far outshone all
Mortals in beauty, Helen, married to a
Most noble husband,

Yet could leave him, sailing awoy to Troy, not
Giving one thought to her daughter or her beloved
Parents, lured from the path of virtue by the
Cyprian goddess:

Thus her will was sapped, and all too lightly
Her heart responded to a lover's advances:
So my mind now turns, recalling Anac-
toria's absence,

Whose enchanting gestures, whose gait, whose radiant
Face with its changing moods I would still far sooner
See than all Lydia's chariots, all her empanoplied
Warriors and squadrons.

Peer of Immortal Gods *(tr. Peter Green)*

Peer of immortal gods he seems to me, that
Man who sits beside you, who now can listen
Private and close, so close, to your sweet-sounding
Voice, and your lovely

Passionate laughter—ah, how that, as ever
Sets the heart pounding in my breast: one glance and
I am undone, speech fails me, I can no longer
Utter a word, my

Tongue cleaves to my mouth, while sharp and sudden
Flames lick through me, burning the inward flesh, and
Sight's eclipsed in my eyes, a clamorous humming
Rings through my eardrums:

Cold sweat drenches down me, shuddering spasms
Rack my whole frame, a greener-than-grassy pallor
Holds me, till I seem a hair's-breadth only
This side of dying.

Yet all must be ventured, all endured, since. . . .

An Absent Friend *(tr. C. M. Bowra)**

A glorious goddess in her eyes
Were you, her comrade, and your songs
Above all other songs she'd prize.

With Lydian women now she dwells
Surpassing them, as when day dies
The rosy-fingered moon excels

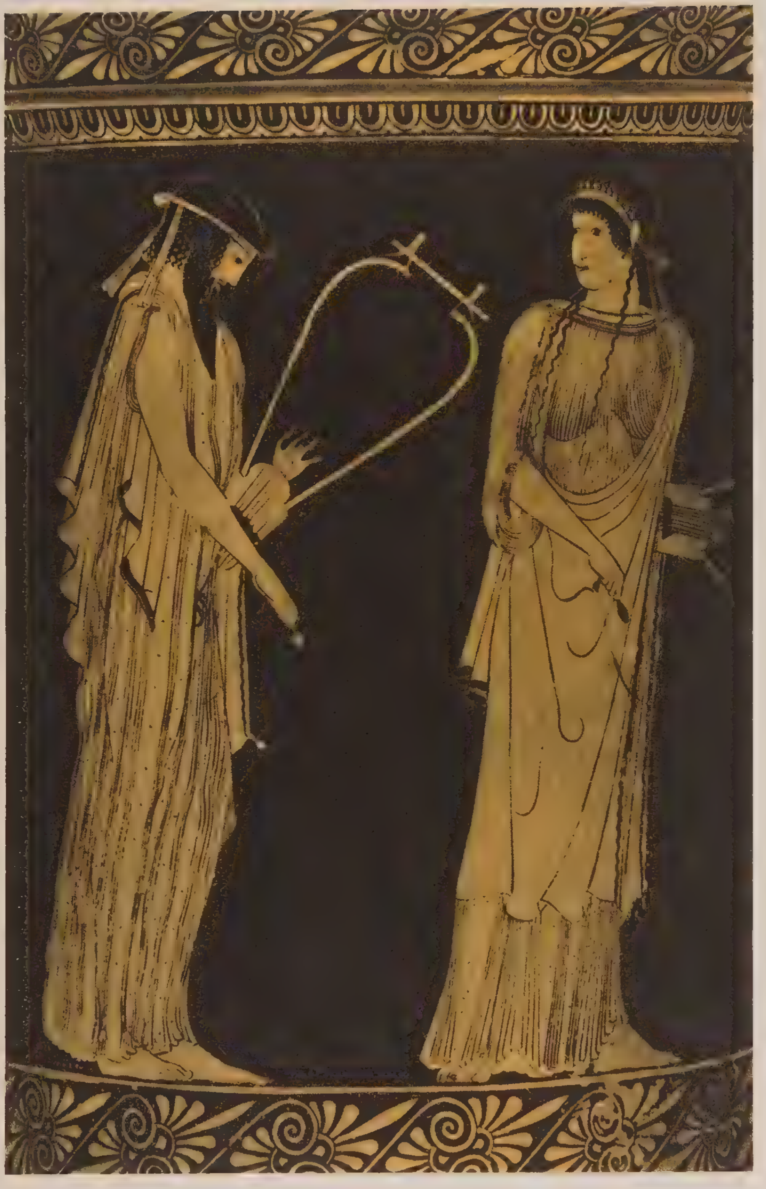
The host of stars, and light illumes
The salt sea and the cornland glows
With light upon its thousand blooms.

In loveliness the dew spills over
And with new strength revives the rose,
Slim grasses and the flowering clover.

But sadly up and down she goes,
Remembering Atthis, once her lover,
And in her heart sick longing grows.

*FROM *The Oxford Book of Greek Verse in Translation*
BY PERMISSION OF THE CLARENDON PRESS, OXFORD

GLYPTOTHEK, MUNICH



This vase painting shows Sappho with Alcaeus, another great poet of Lesbos

needs saying, was a girl. Would-be rival poets get short shrift, too: "When you die and are buried, that'll be that—no one's going to remember *you* hereafter, *you* have no share in the roses of Pieria, you'll be ignored by everyone in Hades just as you were on earth . . ." One can almost see the mischievous, self-mocking expression on her face as she writes: "Mine is not one of your spiteful temperaments: I have a tender heart."

A tender heart she certainly had; and a rare embarrassment it has proved to her modern idealizers, who display the most remarkable talent for arguing that, where the touchy subject of love is concerned, Sappho meant almost anything except what she actually said. One great German scholar asserted—and he was by no means alone in his belief—that she could not possibly have been in love with other women because she was "*eine vornehme Frau, Gattin, und Mutter*"—"an aristocratic lady, wife, and mother"—circumstances which do not seem to have deterred many of her successors. That most passionate of all physical declarations, the ode quoted by pseudo-Longinus in his treatise *On the Sublime* (see "Peer of Immortal Gods," page 109), has been described as a wedding song so often that the grotesqueness of the appellation is not at once apparent. We are, it seems, required to believe that a complacent bridegroom (backed by a full congregation of both families) would sit by and listen enthusiastically while Sappho proclaimed to all the world that his bride's physical charms reduced her, Sappho, to a condition of near-orgasm when she so much as looked at her—a theory not only ludicrous but a good deal more indecent, to my way of thinking, than the obvious and simple truth which it replaces. Professor Page hardly exaggerated when he wrote: "There was never such a wedding song in the history of society; and there should never have been such a theory in the history of scholarship."

For centuries now it has been a favorite pastime, among scholars and others, to prove that Sappho could not have been a Lesbian, in the modern sense of that word; could not have committed suicide; and could not, for good measure, have embarked, in late middle age, on a heterosexual affair with a Mytilene boatman. Sappho, more than most ancient writers, has suffered from misapplied moralizing and misconceived romanticism. One motive, and one only, has dictated the ingenious casuistry applied to the scanty evidence concerning her life: the desire to bring it into line with a preconceived picture of post-Christian purity, delicacy, and rectitude. Axiom follows definition: Lesbianism is morally abhorrent, *therefore* Sappho cannot have been a practicing Lesbian; suicide, apart from its illegality, indicates reprehensible lack of moral fiber, *therefore* Sappho could not have taken her own life; socially, she was from the highest class, a delicate and sensitive lady, *therefore* she could not possibly have had anything to do with a coarse and lecherous boatman. (One casuist attempted to prove the last of these points by claiming her tastes lay in a quite different direction, which is to have it both ways with a vengeance. This is not the place to discuss the phenomenon of bisexuality—except to say that it is far more frequent a condition than strict Freudians seem to suppose.)

Anyone who brings a reasonably open mind to Sappho's work will have to concede her passionate and violent emotional involvement with other members of her own sex. Whether this orientation was taken to its logical, physical conclusion is a point that can never be proved one way or the other—and which, surely, matters very little. (My own feeling, based on a close study of every fragment, is that it was: why else, for instance, should Sappho wish "our" night made twice as long?) The emotional and psychological structure of her personality is the truly important thing; yet year after year, like criminal lawyers battening on a juicy sex case, scholars who should know better have expended passion and ingenuity on attempts to demonstrate—as though this, per se, were of some special, mystical significance—that Sappho did not actually go to bed with her girl friends. Granted this, one gathers, her sublimated passions were at liberty to express themselves more or less as they pleased. It is sad to find such petty police-court mentalities at work on so rare and splendid a character.

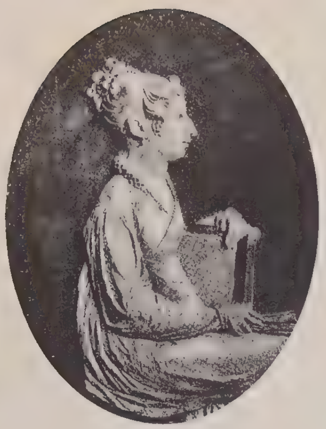
When all else fails, a curious last-ditch argument—familiar to all classical scholars, even if they do not themselves employ it—is regularly brought into play: awkward or unwelcome facts are written off as misunderstood mythology. This is especially true of Sappho's supposed affair with Phaon of Mytilene, and the tradition that she jumped to her death from the white cliffs of Leucas, a western Greek island just outside the Corinthian Gulf. An identical objection is made to both incidents: they are, it is said, pieces of mythology misread as fact (just how we never learn) by ancient biographers. This last claim is plausible, but it cuts two ways. Sappho, as we have seen, shows a marked penchant for viewing personal relationships in a divine or mythological context; it is by no means unlikely that she thought of herself as playing Aphrodite to Phaon's Adonis, or the Moon to his Endymion, and enshrined these fancies in poems. Those who insist that Phaon was a mythical figure have to scrape the bottom of the classical barrel for him, and make what sport they can with a few dubious references in obscure sources.

The social prejudice which militated against the thought of a great aristocratic poetess conducting (at a somewhat unbecoming age) a violent and scandalous affair with some proletarian ferryman is evident in the ancient world no less than in the modern. A tradition arose fairly early that there were *two* Sapphos on Lesbos, the one a poet, the other a courtesan. (The height of confusion is reached by that amiable Byzantine lexicon which it is fashionable nowadays to call the Suda, where we read: "Some authorities declare that the other Sappho was a lyric poet, too.") Curiously, the same people who dismiss Sappho's affair with Phaon as a version of the Adonis-Aphrodite cult make no bones about accepting the exactly parallel story of her middle-aged brother's infatuation with an Egyptian courtesan. Perhaps they might have done so were there not incontrovertible references to the affair in some papyrus fragments.

As for Sappho's leap from the cliffs of Leucas, the main argument against this seems to be that a somewhat peculiar apotropaic ritual used to take place here annually. It was the custom, Strabo tells us, to cast down some guilty person as scapegoat, having previously tied large numbers of birds to him to break his fall and stationed a crowd below in small boats to rescue him. Which of the two stories is less credible, or how the one may be said to have influenced the other, I leave to the reader's imagination though it is remarkable how much nonsense gets by in this supposedly scientific age if it bears the label "ritual custom." It may just be worth pointing out that the account of Sappho's suicide, in this particular place, agrees very neatly with the tradition that Phaon abandoned her and went to Sicily, since Leucas lies on the direct route thither from Greece via the Isthmus of Corinth. We are told that he was up to his old adulterous tricks again in Sicily and was murdered by a jealous husband. Perhaps—it is no more than a guess—Sappho took ship in pursuit of him, and learned of his death from some Corinth-bound sailor when her vessel made its last landfall before the long voyage across the Ionian Sea.

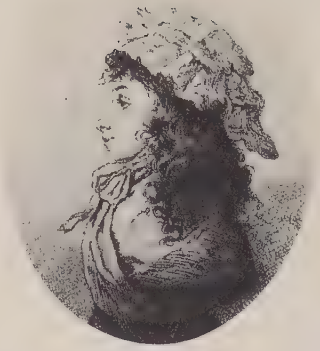
This Sappho, it seems to me, is at least a recognizable and consistent human being, not too flagrantly at odds with the evidence that her own poetry affords us. I must confess to having developed a strong affection for her while writing my novel: I hope I have done justice to that brilliant, wayward, small, vital, ugly creature, with her transfiguring smile, her storms and rages and egocentric tirades, her infinite capacity for self-surrender in love, her sharp and crystalline talent. "Someone, I tell you, will remember us hereafter," she once wrote. She could scarcely have foreseen the strange vicissitudes her reputation would undergo down the ages; which is a pity, because it is hard to conceive of a joke she would have enjoyed more.

Peter Green, a former director of Classical Studies at Selwyn College in Cambridge, now lives in Greece on Sappho's island of Lesbos, where he devotes his time to writing fiction as well as essays.

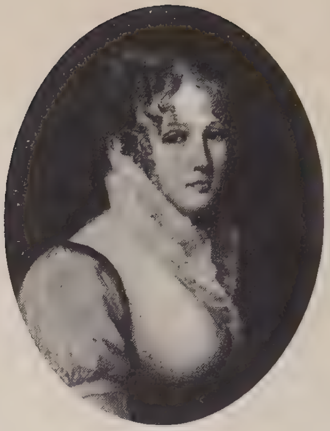


Mme de Chateaubriand

"Her eyes . . . would perhaps have been too bright if an extraordinary sweetness had not half-extinguished her glances and caused them to shine languidly . . ." wrote Chateaubriand of one of his mistresses, the Comtesse de Beaumont. The passage's style is typical and the experience was, too; many ladies responded to him with bright eyes that became romantically languid. Some of his conquests, including the Comtesse, are shown here.



The Comtesse de Beaumont



The Marquise de Sabran

The Complete Romantic

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

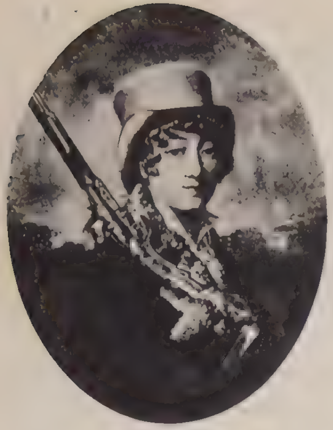
sixteen and impressionable, fell in love with him, and her mother undertook to speak to him. "Monsieur, you have seen how confused I am. I do not know if Charlotte attracts you, but she cannot deceive her mother. I have no doubt but that my daughter has conceived an attachment for you. Mr. Ives and I have talked it over; you would in every way be welcome to us; we believe that you could make our daughter happy. You have no country now; you have lost your parents; your property is sold; there is nothing to take you back to France. Come and live with us, and you shall be our heir." Chateaubriand was all Mrs. Ives said he was—poor and disinherited. But he was unwilling to cut himself off from France or even from his wife; with many tears, kneeling at Mrs. Ives's feet, he confessed that he was married. As the good lady fainted, Chateaubriand made his escape, never to return.

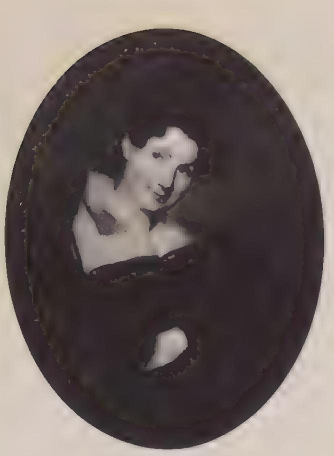
Fortune changed. While General Bonaparte was celebrating his victories in Italy, intrigues for the overthrow of the Directory were proceeding at home, and finally on November 9, 1799—the 18th Brumaire—the tottering regime fell. Bonaparte, ably assisted and rescued from disaster by his loyal supporters, superintended the coup that was to make him First Consul of France. Emigrés streamed back, hopeful perhaps not of a Restoration but at least of the chance to resume their old life. They had been coming for some time; among them was the Marquis de Fontanes, Chateaubriand's old friend and soon, after Bonaparte's coup, an influential figure. He called for Chateaubriand, who—with precious manuscripts in his luggage—obeyed the call. By May, 1800, he was back in Paris, ready to conquer the literary field.

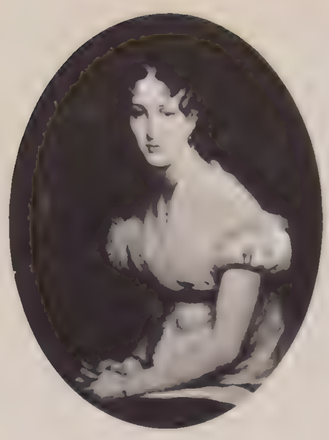
He did conquer it, speedily. In 1801 he published *Atala*, and *Atala* made him famous almost overnight: it was printed, reprinted, translated, talked about. It was a short but moving tale, purportedly told by an old Natchez Indian, Chactas, to an inquisitive French visitor, René. It is a tale of the love of the young Chactas for the Indian maiden Atala, a pious Christian. It is a tale of love in the overwhelming presence of nature, told by an old man remembering the past through a veil of tears. It includes melodramatic rescues, fervent descriptions of lonely forests, poetic evocations of religious sentiment, and it ends, as it must end, in the pious death of the maiden and in the melancholy afterthoughts of the author. Here was the romantic spirit in rebellion against the Enlightenment; here was an odd conjunction—the bitter-sweet—turned into a popular success.

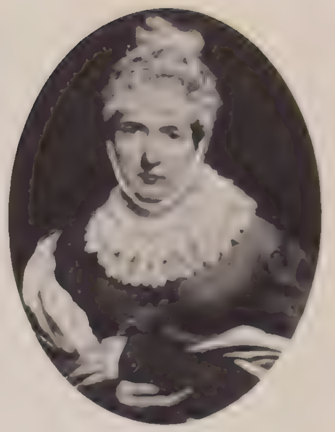
After *Atala* came *Le Génie du Christianisme*, and the public was ready to applaud a work that must seem to us no more than a disorderly array of arguments for sentimental religiosity. *Le Génie du Christianisme* was designed to make Christianity convincing by making it pretty, the source of all that was most pleasing in art and literature. It was this work that showed Chateaubriand's remarkable gift for anticipating and gratifying the public taste. But much of its vogue rested on a brief tale inserted into it, *René*, which was a kind of sequel to *Atala;* it is the tale of a melancholy Frenchman who finds peace nowhere—not in France, nor with his Indian wife. "My heart," the unheroic hero exclaims, "is naturally steeped in ennui and misery." What could be more appealing than that?

France was delighted. Ladies declared themselves enchanted, and proved it by throwing themselves at the new literary lion, while Chateaubriand coolly chose the handsomest. He had half of his life to live, and many adventures before him, but the literary and erotic pattern of his existence, at least, was set. He continued to write about noble savages in America. *Les Natchez*, con-


The Duchesse de Mouchy


Mme Bail


The Comtesse de Castellane


Mme Récamier

ceived many years before and finally published in 1826, offers the same hero—that is, Chateaubriand—a weary, melancholy, yearning European face to face with the seductions of primitive culture. And then there was Chateaubriand the wanderer in the East: *Les Martyres*, part travel tale, part romance, depicts the sufferings and triumphs of the early Christians under the emperor Diocletian, and is larded out with the voyages of some of its characters. It appeared in 1809. Then, two years later, came *L'Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem et de Jérusalem à Paris,* the account of a trip Chateaubriand had taken through the Near East, through scenes later visited by other romantic voyagers—Venice, Greece, the Holy Land. Here too was nature against civilization, Chateaubriand responding to an exotic world. The *Mémoires d'outre-tombe,* begun perhaps as early as 1810 and completed in 1841, may seem different. But it is not different, it merely brings into the open what the other works reveal a little more reluctantly: Chateaubriand's overriding preoccupation with a single subject—Chateaubriand.

As in literature, so in love: more of the same. He saw something of his wife, whose caustic wit and growing piety he sometimes enjoyed but more often resented; he continued to prove irresistible to women less bitter and more beautiful than Céleste. For the last thirty years of his life he had a grand passion for the beautiful and enigmatic Madame Récamier, whom many men had loved in vain and many painters had painted with pleasure. She outlived him and was by his side, old and blind, when he died. But even this passion was punctuated by excursions into other boudoirs; he was, it seems, not only irresistible but also incurable.

What was new in the second half of his life, and what lent it a certain dignity, a certain excitement, was his involvement in politics. There, as everywhere else, he seemed to be posing for the sculptor, but his pose was to some purpose. He had at first admired Bonaparte the Consul, and in 1803 he got his reward: he was made First Secretary of the French Embassy in Rome. But this career did not last. He was proud and insubordinate, and restless in a world that held an ego greater than his own. He soon got his chance at the grand gesture. Bonaparte, anxious to make himself emperor and afraid of a royalist plot against his life, decided to thwart the plot that he might enjoy his empire. In March, 1804, he had the royalist Duc d'Enghien kidnapped from German soil, secretly court-martialed, and shot, as a pointed warning to the conspirators. It was a great crime, perhaps the greatest crime of Napoleon's career, and it shocked many who thought themselves unshockable. On March 21 the news of the murder was out, and Chateaubriand did not hesitate: he sat down and wrote his resignation from the diplomatic corps. It does not matter whether the gesture was theatrical or not; it was very brave. His friends feared for his life, and no one—no one—imitated him. Talleyrand received Chateaubriand's resignation and prudently kept it from Bonaparte for a few days. Then he showed it to him, and Bonaparte, doubtless thinking of the dawning glory of empire, said only, "*C'est bon!*" But whatever the Consul's forbearance, Chateaubriand's political career would now have to wait until Napoleon should cease to count in French affairs. Chateaubriand's old royalist sympathies, never forgotten, now redoubled; he waited for the Restoration, participated in it in 1814–15 when it came, and got his reward under Louis XVIII: Chateaubriand the poet became Chateaubriand the ambassador, and for a time he was even foreign minister. He liked to play these roles; he liked living like a prince in London, with a pretty actress at his side, where he had once lived like a pauper, yearning for some likely girl. But they were roles, presenting the romantic as the omnicompetent Renaissance man. First,

OPPOSITE: BIBLIOTHEQUE NATIONALE—SERVICE PHOTOGRAPHIQUE
ABOVE: ROGER-VIOLLET; MUSEE DES BEAUX ARTS, PAU—GIRAUDON; COLL. MARQUISE DE CASTELLANE—GIRAUDON; GALLERY STROSMAYER, ZAGREB—GIRAUDON

last, and always Chateaubriand was the observant and lyrical singer of himself.

Chateaubriand's song may no longer appeal to us, but in his day—and *for* his day—he sang superbly well. His range was narrow, restricted to a few stark tones, but they were the tones in demand. For his many readers, for his adoring female admirers and male imitators, Chateaubriand was the archromantic.

When his contemporaries thought Chateaubriand's writings romantic, they knew what they meant. For us, the word creates more confusion than it dispels, for, as scholars rightly never cease to point out, "romantic" enshrines varied and often inconsistent meanings. It is Catholic with the Schlegels, Platonic with Shelley, reactionary with de Maistre, radical with Byron; it is proclaimed in Victor Hugo and denied in Goethe. It may appeal to Greece, or to medieval France, or the future, as its ideal; it may strive for the unfinished poem, the polished epigram, or the vast epic; it may eschew discipline or demand it. Its dates differ from country to country, so that some historians call Chateaubriand only a preromantic and think of writers whom he influenced—Lamartine, Hugo, Loti—as the real romantics.

Fortunately, it is not necessary to settle all these questions in order to place Chateaubriand. He was a romantic in the popular sense of the term; when the ordinary reader, unaware of its bewildering complexity, uses the word, he means the mood that Chateaubriand produced.

Now what was this mood? Consider his short novel *René*. Its main character, clearly patterned on the author himself, is a young Frenchman of real gifts and lively sentiments. His unhappiness shows itself early. He lives, after his father's death, with a brother and a sister of whom he is deeply fond. When he leaves, driven by some unsatisfied and unsatisfiable yearning, he notes, with his customary regret, that his beloved sister is glad to see him go; it is only after his return that her emotion, which so depressed him, becomes clear to him: she confesses that her affection for him had been more erotic than sisterly. She becomes a nun and dies young, while he, miserable and suicidal, goes to America, joins an Indian tribe, marries a wife who loves him but does not satisfy his longing for—who knows what?

This bald summary of the plot leaves out what matters most: the painting of scenes from childhood, of the sweet bitterness of early memories, of landscape, of adventures, and above all of a nameless disappointment that haunts the hero and sets the tone of the book. The disappointment is unappeasable precisely because it is the obverse of limitless desire. No human situation could be imagined that would rub it out; and the piquant suggestion that incestuous love is superior to the permitted passions only heightens the inner drama of Chateaubriand's hero. He wants what he cannot have; and even if he had it, it is likely that he would call for something else that he could, in turn, never obtain.

The mood Chateaubriand strives to evoke, and skillfully does evoke, is morose, indeterminate, and guilt-ridden. Clarity and logic are its enemy; the possibility of a happy resolution appears as a kind of insult. Experiences commonly joined—such as viewing a landscape and feeling calm pleasure—are harshly wrenched apart to give way to new combinations: to see a lovely valley, or contemplate the vastness of the ocean, is to awaken melancholy thoughts of lost love or a yearning for death. To love (as here, to love a sister) is to be criminal; in fact, Chateaubriand mingles love and crime with great frequency. There was a moment, René tells a beloved girl, when he wanted to stab her to death, to fix forever her happiness in her breast, and to punish himself for having given her this happiness.

This is morbid stuff, but since it is candidly told, with rich resources of language and extravagant metaphor, it has some power; and it has power, too, because all candid readers will acknowledge with a certain shock of recognition that guilt, longing, and anxiety mixed with pleasure are emotions to which all may confess, and which all may enjoy reading about. The literary problems begin when psychological penetration is reduced to lyrical self-indulgence, when sentiment becomes sentimentality, and when the critical dissection of reason becomes an assault on it.

That this is in fact Chateaubriand's great difficulty—a failure of tact and discrimination combined with a willful irrationalism—shows itself most clearly in his *Génie du Christianisme*. If there is one task that demands rigor, it is apologetics. The apologist may assail human reason, as Pascal did, or exalt it, as Thomas Aquinas did. But he cannot, without penalty, simply evade it. And this is what Chateaubriand does in this book. The *Génie du Christianisme* has been called, a little derisively, a "religious museum," and not without justice. It is, in a certain sense, the ancestor of all the deplorable courses offered in American colleges on "the Bible as Literature." It seeks to seduce readers into becoming Christians for aesthetic reasons: "Unbelief is the principal cause of the decay of taste and of genius," while the Christian story lends itself to ever-varied, always glorious literary or pictorial treatment. The Gothic, like all expressions of the medieval Christian past, is an instance of the remarkable results that artists inspired by the True Religion can produce—a notable advance, this judgment, on eighteenth-century taste, but really quite irrelevant to the truth of the Christian faith.

Chateaubriand did not think it irrelevant. All beauty, he laid down, is mysterious; Christianity is mysterious;

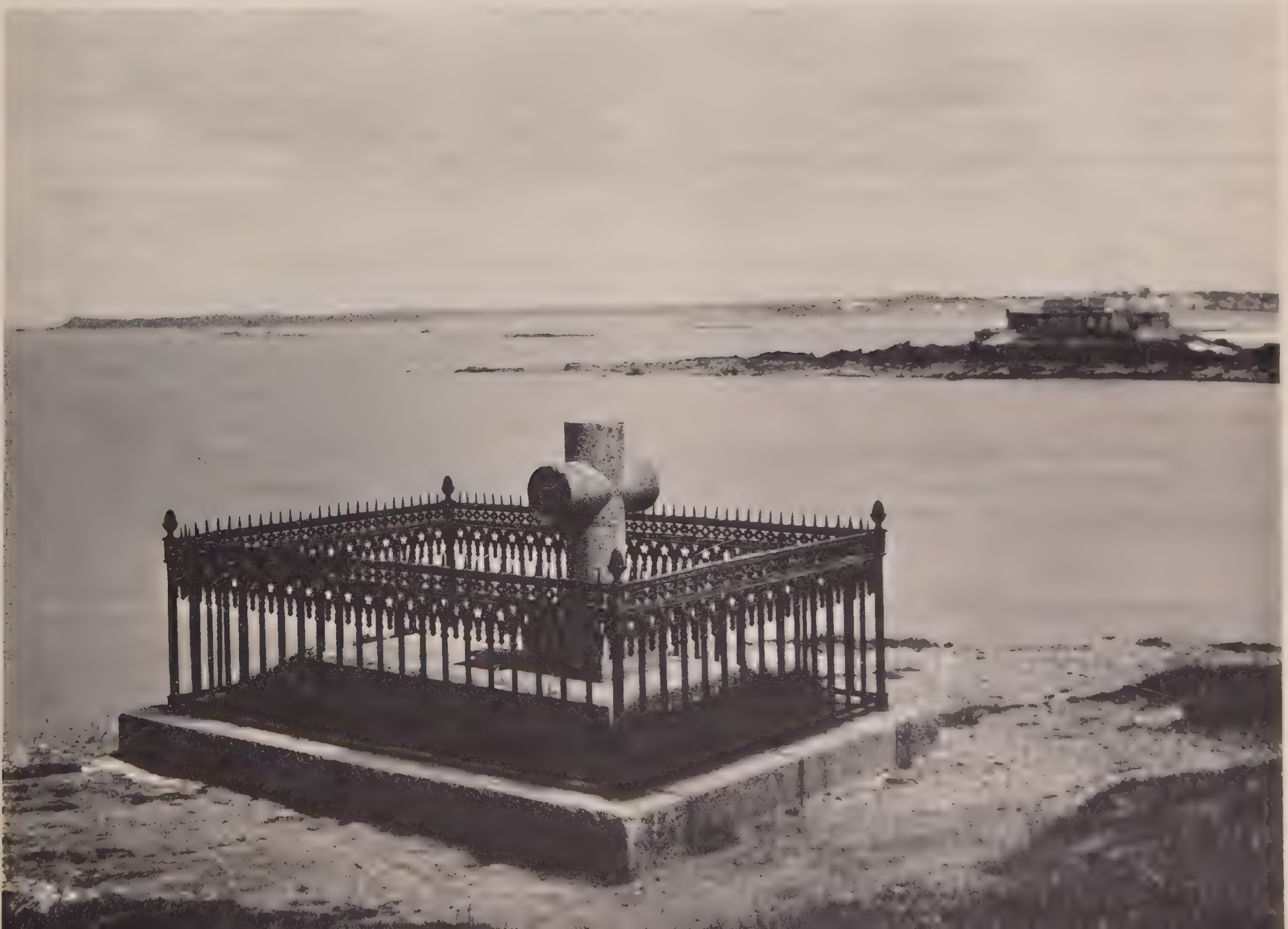
hence Christianity is beautiful. The syllogism works once one admits the major premise. But Chateaubriand went further; he claimed that since Christianity was beautiful, it was true as well. Furthermore its beauty also proved Christianity's value; with religion, the romantic's unhappiness was supposedly overcome and his yearning channeled toward eternal verities and salvation. Such a book, at such a time, when Napoleon Bonaparte was making peace with the papacy and much of France was eager to forget a dozen years of revolution, could not help but be vastly popular. It was only much later that critics began to wonder whether this defense was a defense or a vulgarization; whether, by making Christianity picturesque and poetic, Chateaubriand had not also made it irreligious, a kind of comfortable, romantic, pagan festival.

Chateaubriand always knew what was due him, in life as in death. In the *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*, that vast monument to egotism, he could wonder what might have happened to the history of France if he had died at a certain moment: ". . . if there had been no Chateaubriand? What a difference in the world!" Not long before he died he chose his burial place with the same exquisite egotism, the same urge for the grandiose. He asked to be taken, after his death, to the rock of Grand-Bé, which stands, solitary and isolated from the land at high tide, off Saint-Malo. And there he was taken as he wished, and buried—to listen forever, the biographers tell us with rare unanimity, to the sound of the waves which he had first heard as an infant.

Such a man cannot leave anyone indifferent. He was a giant or a monster, anything but ordinary—in this, too, he was a romantic hero. Not long ago, Simone de Beauvoir tells us, Chateaubriand received a tribute that demonstrates in its very extravagance his enduring power. When Mlle de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre visited Saint-Malo on one of their many excursions, they liked the town, but Chateaubriand's tomb, with its "false simplicity," seemed to them ridiculous in its pomposity, and Sartre (she reports) showed his contempt by urinating on it. It is amusing to wonder just what Chateaubriand, the specialist in gestures, would have made of this gesture, but I think it likely that he would have been pleased. It proves, no matter how wrily, that he had not been forgotten—that he was, in his own way, immortal.

A professor of history at Columbia University, Peter Gay has written extensively about intellectual life in France.

Chateaubriand's grave stands on the tiny island of Grand-Bé outside the port of Saint-Malo in Brittany. The grave is a popular tourist attraction, a fact that would doubtlessly have pleased its occupant.



ND—GIRAUDON

AMERICAN HUMOR, 1966

Samuel Goldwyn, in one of those aphorisms that he may or may not have aphorized, said that anyone who goes to a psychiatrist ought to have his head examined. The same thing is true of anyone who tries to analyze humor. Nothing kills humor faster than an attempt to see what it is. It can be dissected, E. B. White once pointed out, "as a frog can, but the innards are discouraging to any but the pure scientific mind."

This article is therefore not for any reader who is squeamish about watching me operate on a dead frog. Not that I'm going to cut very deep. I just want to poke around in the American humor of today and try to find where it comes from, and why it came at this particular moment, and how it reflects our lives.

My theories won't be definitive, and they may not even be correct. The only fact that I know for sure about humor is that the man who practices it—at least on paper—is a prophet without honor in his own country. Americans don't think that a writer is important unless he is serious, and so they give their prizes to men like Faulkner and Hemingway who are (God knows) serious. But the humorists are every bit as serious in purpose as the Hemingways—more serious, in many ways, and more important in making a nation see itself clearly. Still, it is hard to recall any literary awards going to the likes of Robert Benchley, James Thurber, and S. J. Perelman.

One obvious problem in trying to analyze humor is that no two people think the same things are funny. And yet everybody is sure that he, or she, has a very good sense of humor. In fact, to accuse somebody of not having a sense of humor is the worst insult in America. An American humorist of the early 1900's, Frank Moore Colby, wrote that "men will confess to treason, murder, arson, false teeth, or a wig. How many will own up to a lack of humor? The courage that would draw this confession from a man would atone for everything." But this is common knowledge—most people, told that they are going to meet someone who has "a wonderful sense of humor," brace themselves for a dull time.

A further complication is that one person can enjoy so many different kinds of humor. It amazes me, for instance, that I can be equally amused by Vladimir Nabokov and Groucho Marx. I relish the verbal subtleties of Perelman; yet if I see one baggy-pants clown hit another over the head with a bladder, I'm in paradise. I love a Mack Sennett chase in a silent movie. But I dislike the Tom & Jerry animated cartoon, also based on the principle of a chase, that every American movie-goer is required to see before he can see the feature that he came to see (unless his timing is absolutely perfect). I dislike it because the formula of a cat chasing a mouse is so relentlessly stale. I love newspaper comic strips like "Blondie" and "Peanuts" because they are not only funny but perceptive of so many truths about family life. But I hate the eternal magazine cartoons like "Hazel" and "Dennis the Menace" because it is always the same smart-aleck joke.

I don't much like the sainted Charlie Chaplin because his humor is servile—I feel that he is trying to wheedle my sympathy and my laughs. But I still love W. C. Fields because he didn't give a damn. Fields's philosophy, that anyone who hates children and dogs can't be *all* bad, made him an unusual voice in this land of the sentimentalized home, and for my money his old movies, like *The Bank Dick*, hold up better today than Chaplin's, both as humor and as human observation.

I liked Fred Allen, in the golden age of radio, better than Jack Benny or Bob Hope. Benny once said to Fred Allen, "You wouldn't talk that way about me if I had my gagwriters here!" Which may be the difference. With Benny and Hope I am always aware of gagwriters sweating over their typewriters, but with Allen I was aware only of Allen sweating over his typewriter, polishing such epigrams as this: "A conference of radio executives is a meeting at which a group of men who, singly, can do nothing, agree collectively that nothing can be done." Benny and Hope are funny, but they stick to safe domestic ground. Allen was unique.

Still, it's all a matter of individual taste, and readers are bound to quarrel with some of the opinions that I have expressed—and maybe with all of them. But I cite them for just that reason: to show how much disagreement exists, and also to show how diverse the sources of American humor can be. And I didn't even mention the newspaper column, the night club, the old Burma-Shave signs, the Cole Porter song, the *New Yorker* cartoon, the Joe Miller joke, the poems of an Ogden Nash, or the plays of a Neil Simon. The categories are boundless and only by establishing some bounds can I hope to focus on the humor of today.

And by the humor of today I do not mean what is displayed in bookstores on the "humor" shelf, surely one of the most depressing places in modern America. Typical current titles in New York shops are *Jokes for the John, Poems for the John, Limericks for the John, Happiness is a Rat Fink, Over Sexteen;* a series of little cartoon books about Eggbert, a human embryo who says cute and offensive things; and books by such hard-breathing wits as Art Linkletter and Alan King. This is one area where I'm all for book-burning and police raids.

Every period of American life generates its own humor, the humor peculiar to its needs. These periods used to last much longer—a decade or even a generation—because the country was more rural than urban and our pace was slower. Today we are mainly city dwellers, fretful and neurotic, and our cycles of humor come and go quickly. Mort Sahl, for instance, was on the cover of *Time* six years ago. He was then our national priest; where is he now?

Going back over the last hundred years of American humor, which I have just done and do not recommend, I came across many humorists who just don't seem funny any more. They were folksy sages who misspelled words and wrote under invented names (which evidently was considered a funny thing to do) like "Josh Billings" and "Artemus Ward" and "Petroleum V. Nasby." They were popular because their humor was simple and

By WILLIAM K. ZINSSER

so was America. If they do not seem comic today, except for an occasional giant like Mark Twain, who is timeless, it's not because they have suddenly stopped being funny; it's because we as a people have changed. Our attitudes are more sophisticated.

And the same thing applies right down to the present. Those screamingly funny magazines of the twenties, *Judge* and *Life*, now seem like naïve college humor, but they were a natural product of that innocent decade. Even *Vanity Fair* is not exempt, though those of us who were born too late to read that magazine keep hearing that we might almost as well not have been born at all, so great is the loss in our lives of urbane wit. That urbane wit seems a lot less urbane today—and a lot less witty.

So do the great movie comedies starring people like Irene Dunne and William Powell. So do musicals like *Of Thee I Sing*, which are periodically revived because they were so funny before and would therefore be "such fun" to see again. They're not. They are like the scene in *Lost Horizon* where Margo leaves Shangri-La and turns instantly from a young girl into a wrinkled old woman. Yesterday's humor was conceived for its particular moment, and when we drag it back from the Shangri-La of our memories, it withers before our eyes. Even Will Rogers, our most beloved humorist, might have a hard time catching on today. We would probably find him corny, or at any rate too low-keyed. Television has speeded up our metabolism.

The case of Mort Sahl is interesting because it shows that one of the heaviest influences on American humor is the changing political climate. Sahl rose with Eisenhower and fell when Kennedy came in. He rose *because* of Eisenhower. It is easy to forget how desperately we needed Sahl's voice during those bland years. Looking back now on the Eisenhower era, it seems painfully clear that the nation fell into an eight-year sleep. McCarthyism and fear were allowed to flourish; civil rights decisions were passed and then conspicuously not enforced; culture and the arts were starved; the American image deteriorated abroad; and even the missile gap was later found to be alarmingly wide. But we were not told much about any of this, and we didn't want to be told. We just wanted Ike to assure us that everything was O.K., which he did, and we rolled over and went back to sleep.

Mort Sahl, however, stayed awake, and his response when he found that the whole country was under sedation—which he correctly felt was dangerous—was angry and bitter. Almost as if by some natural law, the most insipid administration provoked the most acid reaction, and probably an acid wit was the only kind that could have cut through the complacent self-righteousness.

Sahl came out swinging. When Neil McElroy, head of Procter & Gamble, was made Secretary of Defense, Sahl called it "a great blow to daytime radio." Of the missile gap, he said: "Maybe the Russians will steal all our secrets—then they'll be two years behind." Of the House Un-American Activities Committee, he said: "Every time the Russians throw an American in jail, the Committee throws an American in jail to get even." He caught Little Rock in thirteen words when he said: "I like Orval Faubus, but I wouldn't want him to marry my sister." And when someone said that Eisenhower ought to take some little Negro girl by the hand and lead her through the crowd to school, Sahl commented: "That's easy to say if you're not involved. But if you're in the administration, you have a lot of problems of policy, like whether to use an overlapping grip." Sahl, incidentally, was a hero to Adlai Stevenson, but Eisenhower had never heard of him - possibly because Sahl referred to his press secretary, Jim Hagerty, as "Ike's right foot."

Anyway, it was very bitter material, and it spawned a new school of comics who, though less political, were equally sardonic, such as Shelley Berman, Mike Nichols and Elaine May, Bob Newhart, and Lenny Bruce. Then Kennedy was elected and the windows were opened and everybody woke up. But Sahl lost his target. His mission was accomplished, and he has largely dropped out of sight, and so have his disciples.

For the country's sake, I'm glad that Sahl is gone. It's not healthy to have such corrosive humor around for too long, or to have the conditions that breed such a humor. But it was a necessary purge while it lasted—and, as a matter of fact, I don't regard Sahl as a cynic, a negative force out to destroy the system. He was an idealist, and he himself once said: "If I criticize somebody, it's only because I have higher hopes for the world, something good to replace the bad. I'm not saying what the Beat Generation says: 'Go away because I'm not involved.' I'm here and I'm involved."

"I'm here and I'm involved": it's the perfect creed for a humorist. If I had to make any one rule about humor, to even partially pin down this slippery subject, it would be that. The humorist must be involved in the life of his times or he's not a true humorist.

Since the fifties, political humor in America has been less bitter. The man now doing Sahl's work is Art Buchwald, and we laugh with Buchwald, where we winced with Sahl. Not that Buchwald's humor is less sharp, or less serious, or less important. Buchwald is a very serious man—and very involved—and he is one of the most important forces in America today because he can say things with humor that none of the solemn pundits can get away with. But unlike Sahl, whose humor was wry and all of one tone, Buchwald uses various humor forms—satire, nonsense, parody, and lampoon—that are funny in themselves, which is why they do not seem so bitter. A typical example might be the column in which Buchwald revealed how Hubert Humphrey was chosen for Vice-President. "One day Mrs. Johnson said, 'You know, Lyndon, we owe the Humphreys a dinner,' and the President said, 'Ah don't have time to have dinner with the Humphreys, but Ah tell you what, Lady Bird, Ah'll make it up to them some way.' "

The other important humorist in this vein is Jules Feiffer, and it is significant that both he and Buchwald have become much sharper, politically, in the past two years. Kennedy had humor, and that's tough competition—it isn't easy to be a humorist when the President is working the same side of the street. Johnson has almost no humor. Buchwald once said: "Some of my inside sources tell me that President Johnson reads me and chuckles. Other equally informed sources tell me that he does not read me. I suspect the truth lies somewhere in between: he reads me but does not chuckle."

I suspect so, too. I picture the President puzzling over Buchwald's columns like a cryptanalyst, trying to find some clue as to what's funny. And Feiffer's needle also goes deeper now. Feiffer didn't use real people in his strip with any frequency until Johnson came into office. Then Johnson began to get him so exercised that he now uses him quite often, as in the strip showing the

President costumed for all his different roles—"policeman to the world," "lover of peace," "seeker of consensus," "educator," and so on—until at the end he is seen in a Superman suit, and he says, "At the close of day what a relief it is to be able to sit in my pajamas and just be myself."

We will undoubtedly get a lot more of that in the years ahead as the Great Society becomes more and more solemnly sure of how great it is. Another law of humor might be that reverence in high places breeds irreverence below, and men like Buchwald and Feiffer are vigilantes on the frontier of pompousness. Will Rogers once insisted that there is no credit in being a humorist when you have the whole government working for you. Still, the scarcity of good political satirists in the thirty years since he died is proof of how hard the job is, and what unusual vision it requires.

One other special stream is Negro satire. This is a new current, and it's going to flow faster every year because it's in the open now—people are interested in hearing it, and Negro comics are more comfortable about creating it. Dick Gregory points out that the possibilities for Negro comics have expanded greatly: "Little things that I knew as a Negro couldn't be used until the public discovered them. They know about most of them now."

Gregory is the most famous of the Negro comics, and he has worked the issue of equal rights with skill and irony. But the one who interests me most is Godfrey Cambridge, a round and amiable man who frequently turns up on television. His comedy is warm and human—its emphasis is more on people than on causes. He seems to know that if he catches the truth about people, the causes will take care of themselves.

One of his recent skits dealt with the strenuous politeness that has arisen between the two races in America. He said that he and a white man were waiting for an elevator: "He was dressed just like I was, with an attaché case, too—you know they copy everything we do. After the doors of the elevator opened, we accidentally bumped into each other. He leaped aside and said 'After you—as a responsible member of the white community I wouldn't want to set a spark to that smoldering resentment that's been harbored in the Negro community for over one hundred years.' I leaped aside and said, 'No, no, after you, because as a responsible member of the Negro community I recognize the danger of offending old friends in the white community and at the same time driving others into the waiting arms of extremists on both sides.' "

It reminds me, in its warmth and its sadness, of Jewish humor in all the years when Jewish comics were talking about their special plight as a minority group. Now Jewish humor has largely become American humor—someone like Woody Allen, for instance, expresses the insecurities of the whole country. He is our representative neurotic when he says: "One day a lot of cars pulled up around my house, and they shined in searchlights, and a voice over the loudspeaker said, 'We have your house surrounded—this is the New York Public Library.' They wanted me to throw out *A Tale of Two Cities* and come out with my hands up."

Meanwhile, with Jewish humor going national, Negro humor is moving out to take its place, unbottled at last. This strikes me as progress.

But the root of contemporary American humor lies deeper than any one element or any single force like politics. A whole point of view is involved.

It is often said that the humorist is a sad man, a tragic clown grieving because the world is in such terrible shape. Probably he is no sadder than anybody else—any priest or social worker can match him as a scholar of gloomy detail, and so can any cleaning woman. His quirk is an ability to see how thin a line separates events that are sad from events that are funny. Thus a novel like *Stern*, by Bruce Jay Friedman, alternates between rolling us on the floor and breaking our hearts, and we never know from page to page—even from sentence to sentence—which it's going to be.

What the humorist really sees is not the sadness of things, but the unusualness of things. He sees that a great many events regarded by most people as perfectly normal are really outlandish. And there has never been a time when the humorist, opening his morning paper or turning on his television set, has noticed so many outlandish things going on in the world that everybody else takes for granted. This is very discouraging, for his comic imagination is constantly being outstripped by reality, and to harness these events, to get some sort of grip on them, he is driven to inventing humor techniques that are even more far-out, more surrealistic, than the events themselves.

My favorite example is *Catch-22*, by Joseph Heller, a novel about an American Air Force unit in Italy during World War II. Its hero, a captain named Yossarian, keeps trying to get out of flying any more missions so that he can stay alive instead of being killed. At one point he goes to the doctor, Doc Daneeka, and tells him that he has decided to go crazy.

" 'You're wasting your time,' Doc Daneeka said.

" 'Can't you ground someone who's crazy?'

" 'Oh, sure. I have to. There's a rule saying I have to ground anyone who's crazy.'

" 'Then why don't you ground me? I'm crazy. . . . ask any of the others. They'll tell you how crazy I am.'

" 'They're crazy. . . . And you can't let crazy people decide whether you're crazy or not.'

"Yossarian . . . tried another approach. 'Is Orr crazy?'

" 'He sure is,' Doc Daneeka said.

" 'Can you ground him?'

" 'I sure can. But first he has to ask me to. . . .'

" 'Then why doesn't he ask you to?'

" 'Because he's crazy,' Doc Daneeka said. 'He has to be crazy to keep flying combat missions after all the close calls he's had. Sure, I can ground Orr. But first he has to ask me to. . . . That's all. Let him ask me.'

" 'And then you can ground him?'

" 'No. Then I can't ground him.'

" 'You mean there's a catch?'

" 'Sure there's a catch . . . Catch-22. Anyone who wants to get out of combat duty isn't really crazy.' "

The novel is full of such encounters, and maybe one reason why I admire it is that it raises so many echoes of my own experience. I was also in the Air Force in Italy during World War II, and I often found myself doing something outlandish—not anything directly military; it was more like making a rock garden for the colonel, or winterizing his jeep so that his mistress wouldn't get cold—and I never quite knew where I had crossed over from doing somethat that had begun in logic to something that was grotesque. And I never know in reading *Catch-22*. It slides imperceptibly from the normal to the fantastic.

I think most soldiers and sailors, of any country in the world, would agree that this is the essential flavor of war—this outlandishness, this sense of being just beyond reality, which would be hilarious if it were not so sad. After the war many serious writers tried to capture their experience with good and serious books like Norman Mailer's *The Naked and The Dead* and John Horne Burns's *The Gallery*. But for me nobody has caught it as vividly as this humorist, Joseph Heller, in this wildly funny and universal book. None of the characters are drawn with any depth—they are burlesques, fleeting by and gone. But the book has more truth than most novels in which the characters are fully developed.

A similar example is the movie *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb.*. The bomb is obviously the central fact of modern life, the root of our anxieties, and various earnest people have tried in books and movies and plays to dramatize it. But the subject is too big, and a somber movie like *On the Beach*, which depicts the last survivors of an atomic war waiting to die, does not really touch us. It tries to be realistic, but we can't realistically picture ourselves in this situation. Whereas *Dr. Strangelove*, which is one of the funniest movies ever made, is impossible to forget—and therefore is one of the most important movies ever made.

When the film came out, it infuriated a large number of people who thought the subject was too serious to be treated with humor. On the contrary, the subject is so serious that it almost has to be treated with humor. Stanley Kubrick, director of *Dr. Strangelove*, is a man both serious and involved, and in the movie he uses humor in its most outrageous forms to bring our possible doom into terms of human stupidity and human error that anybody can understand. The two generals (played by Sterling Hayden and George C. Scott) are burlesques, like the characters in *Catch-22*. But every time I think of them—and I very often do—my laugh is followed by a shudder, for they represent the outmoded view of national strength that could blow us all up tomorrow. The joke turns out to be no joke.

It took great courage to make that movie—and, incidentally, to drop the bomb at the end. Courage is a vital part of humor. The humorist must not only be involved, must not only make a point; he must have the courage to go against the grain, to say things that people may not want to hear. Art Buchwald, for example, performs some act of courage at least once a week.

But the road is full of traps, and the ranks of people who can travel it without falling are small. Last summer a disk jockey named Bob Dayton fell headlong by playing, on the twentieth anniversary of Hiroshima, a recording of "Happy Birthday to You." Promptly severed from his job, he called a press conference to explain that he never dreamed anyone would be offended by his little joke. "The antidote for hundreds of years of tragic events," he said, "has been humor—the ability to laugh at serious situations. This does not lessen the impact or importance of an occasion, but my definition of a laugh is a moment of escape."

It is not my definition of a laugh, nor is Mr. Dayton my definition of a humorist. In the first place, bad taste isn't funny—and there is no reprieve in the fact that he didn't know it was bad taste. In the second place, his attempt at humor was too lazy. It isn't enough just to deflect our attention from the bomb and hope that that will make it go away. It's not going to go away, and Mr Dayton's gag demeans his listeners. A humorist works hard to find the best way of expressing his stand, and when he takes that stand he also takes responsibility for it.

In this whole field of survival and defense, books like *Catch-22* and movies like *Dr. Strangelove* are obviously a long jump from Private Hargrove and Sad Sack and Willie & Joe, or from Edward Streeter's World War I rookie, and a humorist looks back on those simpler forms with envy. Today it is hard for him to conceive of anything as inconceivable as the event itself. Take this piece by James Reston in the *Times* describing his flight to Saigon on a troop plane and the American soldiers on it going to war: "Pretty girls gave them hot scented towels before dinner, brought them a couple of drinks, served them steak and apple pie, and comforted them down with pillows and blankets for the movie to follow. After Jimmy Stewart in *Shenandoah*, the soldiers had a choice on the intercom of the speeches of Churchill, the adventures of Popeye—who has now apparently been wired for sound—some good music, or a Tchaikovsky concert."

Or this item from the *Times* of the same week: "The Pentagon disclosed today that the commander of the First Cavalry Division had refused to accept the 'austere' accommodations aboard the aircraft carrier Kula Gulf for his helicopter pilots and crew chiefs. The Pentagon indicated that General Kinnard had balked at having his officers assigned to ship's quarters that usually accommodate enlisted men."

It was also at about this time that the newspapers ran a picture of a Marine setting fire to a Vietnamese peasant family's thatched hut with his cigarette lighter. Wholly apart from the pros and cons of Viet Nam, these two items, taken at random from one week of the war, struck me as odd. The cigarette lighter is a luxury object, identified with civilian life and ease. I'm jolted to see it being used to set another man's house on fire.

Such events are slightly beyond reality, in an undefined new region where our life is increasingly being led, and a writer who tries to grapple with them by moralizing or pompous attacks may not get far. The best explorer of this region is an artist who will venture still farther beyond reality, and that's the "black humorist," or whatever label fits writers like Heller, Friedman, Nabokov, J. P. Donleavy, and Edward Albee.

There is almost no other way to contend with, say, the John Birch Society's promise to Ronald Reagan that it would either support or attack his bid for Governor of California, whichever would do him the most good. Or the fact that dried calf-droppings from Lyndon Johnson's ranch are now being sold in cellophane bags, for 98 cents, as "LBJ Land Chips."

Items like that jump out of the press every day. Here's one about the cartoon that Walt Disney is making of *Winnie-the-Pooh*: "*Winnie-the-Pooh* was big in the thirties and forties, but Disney Studios feels the story lacks a certain dramatic violence for today, so a new character, Gopher, has been introduced. Gopher, who is always blowing things up, stands for today's violence." It will be nice to have him around the Forest, putting bombs in Pooh's honey pots and shooting at Owl just for kicks.

And speaking of movies, here's an item in which James A.

Nicholson, a maker of horror films, defends the honor of his craft: "We asked ourselves if we were on sound dramatic footing in producing the chill-thrill, horror-and-terror pictures. Well, we found that each time our villain, be he maniac or monster, got his comeuppance after having tried to throw the heroine into a bottomless pit, he had actually enacted a modern version of the classic medieval morality play. Virtue had triumphed over evil."

Could a humorist top that? It wouldn't be easy. I might try to top it by saying that if you're in doubt, you could call "Dial-a-Movie," which will give you a recorded moral evaluation of the pictures currently in town, along with a commercial for a savings-and-loan firm, and if you're still in trouble, call "Dial-a-Saint," which will give you a quotation from the Bible and a commercial for a funeral home. Except that there is such a service.

There's no end of daily examples, and it's a safe bet that every humorist, whatever vein he works, can hardly reach his typewriter for the clippings piled on the floor, taunting him with ludicrous detail.

Last summer a Mrs. Gloria Placente was driving along a parkway near the World's Fair in an aquamarine sports car, wearing short shorts, when she was stopped and New York's Police Commissioner, its Deputy Police Commissioner, twenty patrolmen, and two hundred reporters and photographers charged across the grass to witness her arrest. It was a demonstration arranged by the Police Department of its Operation Corral—named, at no small mental effort, for Computer Oriented Rapid Recovery of Auto Larcenists—whereby a Univac computer had its "memory drum" fed with the license numbers of motorists who failed to answer traffic summonses. Mrs. Placente, who had gone through a red light several months earlier, was the motorist unlucky enough to be picked up by the old memory drum on the day of the press demonstration.

The story was given page-one publicity, and a number of people undoubtedly felt—I certainly did—that it was a gross violation of Mrs. Placente's privacy and her individual rights. But she had the final word. To the herd of cops and journalists bearing down on her she said: "It should happen to your wives. Better yet, it should happen to your mothers." Then she added: "You look like a bunch of lunatics." A humorist would not have written as funny a script, or thought of such outlandish names, or made the point with such economy.

Given such stiff competition, the humorist occasionally finds that he cannot go any farther out, and his only choice is to play it straight. Terry Southern faced this problem in a piece called "Twirling at Ole Miss," an account of his visit to the Dixie National Baton Twirling Institute at the University of Mississippi. The article is included in a recent anthology called *Black Humor*, and at first glance it doesn't seem to belong there, for the other pieces in the book—by authors like Heller, Friedman, Donleavy, Nabokov, Thomas Pynchon, and John Barth—are wild and fanciful, whereas Southern's is a factual survey of the various courses in baton-twirling that are offered at the Institute.

But like the pop artist, who is often accused of merely reproducing reality, Southern makes his comment and achieves his humor by careful selection of detail. "A pretty girl of about twelve," he writes, in a typical paragraph, "was tossing a baton sixty feet straight up, a silver whir in the Mississippi sunlight, and she beneath it spinning like an ice skater, and catching it behind her back, not having moved an inch. She said she had practiced it an hour a day for six years. Her hope was to become 'the best there is at the high toss and spin'—and she was now up to seven complete turns before making the catch. Was there a limit to the height and number of spins one could attain? She guessed not."

Ordinarily Terry Southern is one of the most far-out of our black humorists, but in this case he had to come back in, to retreat into mere reporting. In effect he is saying, "You guys have got me beat for fantastic material." But he made his point.

So, if that's black humor, and if works that are quite different from each other are also black humor—like Albee's *The American Dream* and Donleavy's *A Singular Man* and Pynchon's *V* and Heller's *Catch-22*—anyone might well ask what black humor is, or (discarding that label) what the unifying theme of current American humor is.

I will not attempt a definition, though perhaps I have partly defined it already by example. It might be defined further by saying when I think it came into American life, and who brought it. I date its advent from *Lolita*. This novel of Nabokov's is the master book of the period. It got here firstest with the mostest ingredients of what I consider the humor of our time. It is outrageous, and it delights in its own outrageousness, its mockery of sacred American values. It is sardonic in its selection of social detail—in fact, it is one of the best travel books on America ever done. It is bold; it is unsentimental; it is wildly inventive; it is brilliantly written; and it is plain outright funny. It makes many points and offers no solutions, but by the end a reader has been made to see many old things in a new way.

These are the qualities that I see running through the American humor of 1966—the humor of all the writers and comics and movie makers and artists who, since *Lolita*, have been groping along the same path. On their behalf I can say, "Please don't shoot the humorist, he's trying his best."

In his experiments he will often hit upon methods which mystify his readers and his audience, or which they think are absurd, or which just don't work. But to me the exciting thing is that there are so many experiments, so many high-wire acts with no net below. America is full of humorists risking their necks every day. They have courage, or they would not be taking the risk. They are serious. And they are involved. To them, in other words, humor is no laughing matter.

William K. Zinsser, whose work appears frequently in HORIZON *and other magazines, is a well-known writer and critic of American humor.*